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The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of his Mission to the Hottentots.

(Continued from page 299.)

WHEN we firſt entered upon our work, we labored to convince our hearers by arguments addreſſed to their underſtandings, but our endeavors in this way had little ſucceſs. They continually raiſed objections and difficulties. We then reſorted to another method; we inſiſted chiefly on the dying love of Chriſt, in the moſt ſimple and affectionate manner; we repreſented him as the all-ſufficient friend of loſt and helpleſs ſinners; tenderly inviting them to come to him that they might be ſaved; and intreating them to give the fair trial of experience to our doctrine, by praying to Jeſus. Since we adopted this method, the Lord has been pleaſed to make the word effectual to many ſouls. From time to time our hearers, who were before impenetrable, came to us, and with tears in their eyes, declared that they perceived, more and more, the truth and excellency of the goſpel which we preached, finding it to be the power of God to their ſalvation. This was particularly the caſe of the tame Hottentots who occaſionally heard us. About Chriſtmas, 1799, ſeveral farmers from a diſtance, came to partake with us, according to the Dutch cuſtom, of the Lord's Supper. Some of them had been awakened under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Voſs, at Rodezand, but now came to our ſettlement, becauſe it was nearer. The proviſions they brought us were very ſeaſonable and we ſpent ſeveral days with them in the moſt agreeable manner.

My garden now began to aſſume a flouriſhing aſpect, and promiſed ſoon to enable me to ſupply at leaſt twenty gueſts

with its produce, beſides occaſional food for the Boſchemen, who, by the way, are no great admirers of vegetables. Indeed they would ſcarcely eat them at all, if I did not ſave them the trouble of cooking them, and take them to their huts ready for uſe.

In January, 1800, I found it neceſſary to take a journey to the Cape Town, for the purpoſe of procuring the neceſſary ſupplies for my people, particularly clothes. I was forwarded by a friendly farmer, who furniſhed us with a waggon and oxen. A number of Boſchemen alſo, who had never been at the Cape, offered to accompany me. This afforded me great ſatisfaction, as it was a certain proof that the ſuſpicions they had entertained of us were declining, and that they felt an increaſing confidence in us.* We travelled agreeably, though ſlowly; our company both old and young, being obliged to walk all the way. When we ſtopped at night, near a fountain in the deſert, we enjoyed ſweet opportunities in ſinging and prayer; and when we entered the inhabited parts called Middle Roggefield (or Rockfield) the farmers collected the people from

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* *Mr. Kicherer, when in London, mentioned to a friend that such were the ſuspicions the Boſchemen entertained of the Miſsionaries at firſt, (wicked men having told them that they would be insnared and killed) that they would not venture to eat with him. On a certain occaſion, Mr. K. wiſhing to gain their affections invited a number of them to partake of a refreſhment which he had prepared for them. Having cut a large cake, he preſented a ſlice to each of them. Not one of them dared to eat a morſel. Mr. K. perceiving this, and guessing at the reaſon, took a piece himſelf, and ate it before them. He then told them that he had called them together, to aſſure them of his friendſhip, and to inform them that as they were all invited to eat of that one cake, ſo there was one Saviour, the bread of life, for Hottentots as well as others, of whom they might freely partake, and live for ever. This ſatisfied them, and they all received this token of his love with pleaſure.*

the adjacent country, who were glad of an opportunity to ſpend the Lord's day with us in public worſhip.

On our journey we met a Hottentot ſervant with ſome ſaddle oxen laden with flour for our ſettlement; this was the preſent of a well diſpoſed farmer, and muſt have proved highly acceptable to Brother Kramer, whom I had been much concerned to leave at home almoſt without bread.

After about a month's travelling, we reached Cape Town, having preached the goſpel of Chriſt every Sabbath-day as we paſſed through the country, and have reaſon to be thankful that it was rendered a bleſſing both to Chriſtians and Heathens. When approaching the Cape, my feelings diff ed widely from thoſe of my poor Boſchemen. I anticipated with delight, the pleaſing ſcenes before me, but they were ſtruck with dread and diſmay. Some of the firſt objects which preſented themſelves to their affrighted view were ſeveral men hung in chains for atrocious crimes, and many of the Boſchemen were conſcious of having deſerved the ſame puniſhment. Their terror was ſoon increaſed by beholding in a few days the public execution of another malefactor. I took this opportunity of explaining to them the nature and excellence of European juſtice, as an ordinance of God, who had appointed civil governors for the puniſhment of bad men, and the reward of the good. This pacified them: they allowed the propriety of it, and ſaid it would be happy for our ſettlement in the wilderneſs, if a ſimilar order of things could be eſtabliſhed there.

Soon after our arrival at Cape Town, I was called to preach at the Calviniſt church, a very capaci ous building, then overflowing with a very genteel auditory. My Boſchemen, accompanying me, were greatly ſtruck with the large number of well-dreſſed people, whom, in their ſimplicity, they compared to a neſt of ants; and the ſound of the organ was at firſt miſtaken by them for the noiſe of a ſwarming bee-hive. From that time they entertained a higher opinion of their miniſter; for, before they had been tempted to conſider me as a beggarly fellow, who had come among them merely to obtain a liveli-

hood. I embraced every proper opportunity of introducing them into Chriſtian company, and religious meetings. They ſeemed to receive benefit upon all theſe occaſions, being thereby convinced of two things, namely, that the doctrine I preached was agreeable to the common creed of Chriſtians, and alſo, that Chriſtians in general were far happier than Boſchemen. I grant that theſe convictions do not conſtitute ſaving faith in the goſpel; yet, in this inſtance, they prepared the way for it. We waited on ſeveral of the chief magiſtrates, particularly Mr. Renefield, the Fiſcal, by whom we were kindly received, and preſented with abundance of uſeful articles, chiefly conſiſting of wearing apparel for my poor people. The Boſchemen, clad in their filthy Karoſſes (or ſheep ſkins) ſitting in a drawing room on ſilk covered chairs, or parading before large pier glaſſes, were the objects of much good natured mirth, as well as of ſincere compaſſion. The Fiſcal did us the honor of preſenting us to the governor, who was pleaſed to ſhew us great kindneſs. The Boſchemen thanked him, in their way, for permitting Miſſionaries to come and teach them, no man before having cared for their ſouls.

It was now neceſſary to return to our ſettlement, but our journey proved very uncomfortable, the country being inundated by the copious rains which had lately fallen. At length, however, in the month of March, we regained our place, Happy Proſpect Fountain, where we found our friends in good health and ſpirits, for which we returned our humble and heartfelt thanks to the Lord our Shepherd.*

I cannot proceed without mentioning a peculiar event which took place during my abſence. The captain of the Boſchemen, named Vigilant, had come to our ſettlement to ſeize a

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* *In a former letter Mr. K. referring to this journey, says, on my travels of eight weeks I had daily to provide thirteen people with victuals. I went out without any thing, and brought back with me one hundred and thirty-six sheep, and four cows, which the Christians did give us with a thankful heart.*

ſheep as his due. Brother Kramer oppoſing him, Vigilant ſtabbed the ſheep, and then aimed a ſecond thruſt at our Brother, whoſe life was, however, providentially preſerved by the interpoſition of a girl ; who warded off the blow with her Karoſs. Vigilant, being ſeized by Brother Kramer, whom the Lord, on this occaſion, endowed with unuſual ſtrength and intrepidity, was conveyed to the next farmer, Florus Ficher, who confined him with a view of ſending him for trial to Cape Town. Eſcaping from his keepers, he returned ſoon after I reached home, to our place of abode, foaming with rage, and calling upon his numerous horde to aſſiſt him in revenging the affront. Our ſituation was now extremely critical, but we looked up to the Lord, who obſerved our trouble, and in his great mercy ſent us that very night my dear friend and brother, Mr. Scholtz,* from the Cape, together with a farmer and ſervants whoſe timely arrival produced the happy effect of driving this infuriated chief from our neighborhood. On this occaſion we witneſſed the friendly diſpoſition of ſome of the Boſchemen towards us, for while our lives were threatened, many of them kept watch around our habitation.

Soon after this, Brother Kramer left us to go to Hex River, and Brother Edwards departed to the Cape. I then removed, accompanied by Brother Scholtz, to Zak River, where we ſat down the latter end of March, 1800, all our Boſchemen following us. At this place numbers of tame Hottentots came to join us.—Theſe people have a little property conſiſting of

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* *Mr. Scholtz continued with Mr. Kicherer for about three years, and proved highly serviceable to him as his companion and assistant, particularly in teaching the children. He returned with him to Europe, and is now about to prosecute his studies at one of the Dutch Universities, with a view to the ministry of the gospel, we trust, among the Heathen. The Society is under great obligations to Mr. S. for his disinterested labors, and the advantages which the settlement derived from his respectable connections at the Cape.*

ſheep and oxen ; the Boſchemen, on the contrary, ſubſiſt entirely on the produce of the chaſe, ſuch as Tigers, Jackalls, &c. &c. or when theſe cannot be procured, on wretched reptiles or wild roots, and too often by the plunder of their neighbors. Though we thus increaſed in numbers, I cannot ſay we increaſed alſo in grace, for as yet, I frequently had cauſe to fear that no abiding impreſſion had been made on theſe fickle ſouls, and I was in great heavineſs on this account.

Juſt then I received an invitation to be miniſter at the Pearl, a rich village near Cape Town, with a handſome church.··· My mind was greatly perplexed, for I knew not whether I ought to conſider this as a temptation to divert me from my attention to the heathen, or as a call from the Lord to a more uſeful ſtation. In this ſtate of my mind, that word was deeply impreſſed: '*Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me.*' Accordingly I committed myſelf moſt earneſtly to the Lord, entreating him to give me clearneſs in this affair, and manage it for me. My mind ſoon recovered its compoſure, and I received a ſtrong providential intimation that it was not the Lord's will to ſend me to the Pearl as ſtated miniſter, ſome difficulty being ſtarted on the ſubject, which I was not anxious to remove ; and from that very time the Lord vouchſafed to bleſs my labors in a remarkable manner, ſo that many perſons whoſe hearts had been harder than the rocks among which they lived, began to cry out '*What muſt we do to be ſaved?*' Frequently in a literal ſenſe, the very hills reſounded with their loud complaints.

One of the firſt converts, at this time, was the old baſtard Hottentot, John.* For ſome time paſt he felt a ſtrong inclination to come and hear the word of God. From this deſign, ſome of the neighboring farmers, being carnal men, had endeavored to diſſuade him ; inſinuating that I ſhould certainly

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* *A baſtard Hottentot does not mean a perſon of illegitemate birth, but one whoſe parents are not* both *pure Hottentots, one of them being of another nation.*

either fell or kill him. However, he could not reſiſt his internal monitor. He came and heard. Having ſat a few days under the ſound of the goſpel, he began to cry aloud under the painful ſenſe of his ſins, which he compared for number to the ſands of the deſert. Indeed he had been an atrocious offender. After he had for ſome time mourned bitterly on account of his tranſgreſſions, he began to ſpeak of the love of Chriſt to ſinners in general, and to himſelf in particular. This was now his darling topic all the day long, while his eyes overflowed with tears of love and gratitude. His heart was now ſo entirely taken up with the things of God, that he could ſcarcely bear to ſpeak of any thing elſe; when ſpoken to on ſome worldly buſineſs he would ſay—"Oh, I have ſpoken too "much about the world, let me now ſpeak of Chriſt." Indeed, he did ſpeak of him, in a way that greatly ſurpriſed me; I am perſuaded he never heard any perſon ſpeak the ſame things. He was moſt evidently and eminently taught of God. In the mean time his walk and converſation were ſuch as became his profeſſion. In his heatheniſh ignorance, he had four wives, and two at the time of his coming to hear the goſpel. He came to me one day and ſaid, He muſt put away his two wives. I aſked him why? He anſwered, "Becauſe when I "go to God in prayer, my heart tell me it is bad; and Chriſt "more near to me than ten thouſand wives. I will ſupport "them; I will work for them; and will ſtay till God change "their hearts; then I will take the firſt whoſe heart be chang-"ed." After a ſhort but lively courſe of grace, which continued five or ſix months, the Lord laid him on a ſick bed, from which he never recovered. He now inſiſted upon being carried to our place of worſhip, ſaying that as long as he could hear, he would endeavor to catch ſome of the words of life. Two days before his death I went to ſee him. I aſked him how he felt. "A little low-ſpirited," was his anſwer; "for "though I am ſure that I have ſurrendered every inch of my "own ſelf to Chriſt, from the moment I firſt ſaw his loveli-"neſs, yet I am not ſo certain, at preſent, whether he has ac-

"cepted of my ſurrender." I endeavored to ſatisfy him on this ſubject; but he found no clearneſs till the day of his departure, when calling on him again, he ſaid to me, "O Sir, "I now ſee that the Lord Jeſus love me with an everlaſting "love; that he has accepted of me, and that he will be my "portion for ever; and now, though the vileſt ſinner on earth, "relying on his blood and righteouſneſs, I will die, and go "Chriſt, and there I will wait for you."

His eldeſt ſon, Cornelius, who was a ſervant to a farmer at a diſtance, came to viſit his father juſt at this moment. He burſt into tears, and ſaid, "Ah, my father die ſo happy in Jeſus, "and I have no opportunity to hear his goſpel." Moved by his ſorrow, I wrote to his maſter, requeſting he would permit him to come and live with us, I received a very Chriſtian like letter from him, ſaying, that although he would not on any other account, part with his beſt ſervant, yet for the ſake of the goſpel he would give him leave to come. Cornelius joined us, and the Lord was pleaſed to bleſs the word of reconciliation to his ſoul alſo. At firſt he cried mightily to the Lord to forgive his ſins, and thought to move him by the earneſtneſs of his intreaties, yet he found no peace within, till at length he learned that he could be juſtified only by the blood of Chriſt; he then obtained ſolid peace in the contemplation of the perſon of our Redeemer. His heart was filled with admiration, love and gratitude, and he felt a ſtrong deſire to proclaim our Saviour to thoſe who knew him not. Indeed he thought himſelf called upon to forſake his wife and children, and go to diſtant tribes to preach Jeſus to them. For half a year he ſtruggled againſt this impulſe; his body waſted in this ſecret conflict, for he concealed from every mortal what paſſed in his boſom. At length, unable any longer to ſuſtain this burden, he ſuddenly flung his knapſack over his ſhoulders, and marched off into the wilderneſs. Here he fell on his knees to pray; when thoſe words came powerfully into his mind; "Thou didſt well that it was in thine heart;" but it ſeemed added—"Go back to thy houſe and family, and firſt try to "bring them near the Lord; after this I will let thee know

" what thou ſhouldſt do." Accordingly he returned home, where he conducted himſelf in a pious manner, and I have reaſon to hope that at ſome future period he may become very uſeful to his countrymen.

If my time permitted, I could relate many more inſtances of the Lord's gracious dealings with our people; ſome of them perhaps, may appear hereafter, in detached accounts. I muſt not omit, however, the caſe of Eſther. Her original name was Tray, a Coranna by birth. When ſhe made her firſt appearance among us, I could ſcarcely perſuade myſelf ſhe was of the human ſpecies. Her whole carriage denoted brutality in the extreme. Her Karoſs, or ſheep ſkin garment, was the moſt filthy I ever ſaw or ſmelt. Many a time have I thought, Surely it is abſolutely impoſſible that ſuch a being ſhould ever be converted! But, where ſin and wretchedneſs abounded, grace was ſtill more to abound. Soon did her penitential tears begin to flow under the hearing of the word of peace, and when aſked, Why ſhe wept? the reaſons ſhe aſſigned were always ſo pertinent and proper, that I was convinced her underſtanding was far ſuperior to what I had ſuppoſed. After ſome time, ſhe found herſelf obliged to leave her huſband, who had three other wives, and followed us in all our future journies. For more than a year ſhe continued to be uneaſy under a ſenſe of her ſins; but, at length, the Lord comforted her ſoul; ſhe was baptized, and is become one of the moſt active, induſtrious, and uſeful members of my congregation. Her conduct is unexceptionable.

About this time, ſeveral farmers having aſſembled at our houſe, to partake of the holy communion, a run-away ſlave made his appearannce. We ſoon diſcovered who he was, and thought of ſending him back to his maſter, agreeable to an order of government. He, perceiving our intention, determined to be revenged, and while we were at worſhip in the church, contrived to poiſon our well. Our lives would certainly have been deſtroyed, had not a little girl providentially watched him, when committing this atrocious act. She gave us timely notice; the ſlave was examined, and we found in

his clothes the remainder of the poiſon, which was a ſort of moſs, reſembling human hair; this powerful vegetable has the property of contracting the bowels in a convulſive manner. The culprit was ſent to Cape Town, and we returned thanks to the Lord for this great deliverance.

Another ſingular eſcape from death deſerves to be recorded. In the evening of a day which was uncommonly ſultry, I was ſitting near an open window, when a concealed party of Boſchemen, were juſt about to diſcharge a volley of poiſoned arrows at me; but, by the ſame girl who ſaved the life of Brother Kramer from the dagger of Vigilant, they were detected, and made off in haſte.

During our continuance here, a man whoſe name was Peter Goeiman repeatedly viſited us from the great river, in order to hear the word. He long withſtood the humbling truths of the goſpel, refuſing to be ſtript of his own fancied righteouſneſs, and ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God our Savionr. At length, however, he yielded; and while at work with Mr. Scholtz, (being employed in making a dam for the water) confeſſed that he had formerly hardened his heart againſt the repreſentation of the goſpel, that he was in a miſerable ſtate, being unable to do any good, as he now clearly underſtood. He acknowledged that till lately he had been full of prejudices againſt our doctrine, having flattered himſelf that though he had done much evil, he had nevertheleſs done much good alſo. But now, ſince God had revealed this great truth to his mind. namely, that he had given his only begotten Son to be a ſacrafice for him on the Croſs, he had been gradually freed from his former prejudices, eſpecially under a diſcourſe from Mr. Scholtz, in which the only ſource of all good works, the love of God, had been explained, together with the utter inability of a natural man to perform good works. "From that time," ſaid he, "I fought pardon for all my ſins alone from "Chriſt, and in him I have found it. Now, I believe in Jeſus, "and wiſh to be his eternal property, now I am aſſured that "I ſhall one day be completely delivered from all my ſin, and "enjoy eternal happineſs with Chriſt." Aſking him, whether

he did not wiſh to commend the truth to others? he replied that he did ſo every day; and that his wife already afforded him ſome hope that ſhe would yield to convictions, and this encouraged him, he added, to ſpeak to others, declaring to them the name of that bleſſed Jeſus, who had done ſuch great things for him.

Before I conclude the narrative of my firſt ſtay at Zak River, it is proper to mention another remarkable deliverance, which the good Providence of God afforded me, from the hands of a perſon who came to our houſe under the fictitious name of Stephanos, a Greek by birth, and who, for making baſe coin at Cape Town, had been ſentenced to death, but effected his eſcape from juſtice, a few days previous to that which was fixed for his execution. The rumor of this affair had indeed reached my ears, and when he came to my houſe, in the abſence of the Brethren Kramer and Scholtz, who were gone ſix days journey from us with preſents of tobacco, to invite more Boſchemen to come and hear the goſpel, I thought I perceived tokens of guilt in his countenance. But his converſation was ſo religious, and his pretence that he came to aſſiſt us in building a chapel, ſo plauſible, that I blamed myſelf for harboring any ſuſpicion, and therefore permitted him to ſleep in the room next to my own. It ſhould ſeem that he had contrived a ſcheme to murder me, that he might ſeize on my waggon and goods, and then depart to a diſtant horde. In the night, he actually approached my bed; but the Keeper of Iſrael, who never ſlumbers nor ſleeps, was pleaſed ſuddenly to rouſe me in a fit of terror, in which I cried out to him, as if privy to his bloody deſign. He was diſconcerted; ſtammered an apology of a pain in his bowels; and then went away out of my houſe. In the morning I found he was gone off, having ſtolen my gun, and having taken with him many of the Boſchemen, whom he had ſeduced, by pretending that the white men were coming to be revenged on them; Boſchemen, having always an accuſing conſcience, are ever ready to take ſuch a hint. My Hottentots purſuing them, overtook them in the deſert; a truce was concluded, both parties

piling up their arms at ſome diſtance, when Stephanos was compelled to reſtore my fouling-piece, and diſmiſs our Boſchemen. Thus, retiring from the country by himſelf, he was met by brethren Kramer and Scholtz, who obliged him to return to Zak River with them. This involved me in a freſh difficulty, and occaſioned me much ſorrow; for I was now certain that he was the identical malefactor who had broken priſon at the Cape. I begged my two brethren to keep the wretch concealed at a diſtance from our premiſes, with a view to enable him to make his eſcape. In the night I met him, gave him my advice, ſome proviſion, and a bible, and ſuffered him to go away towards the great river, little thinking what miſchief he would there do our cauſe, of which hereafter.

(To be continued.)

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON THE UNLAWFULNESS OF A MAN'S MARRYING HIS NIECE BY AFFINITY.

WHETHER it is lawful or not for a man to marry the daughter of the ſiſter or brother of a former wife, is a queſtion which has given riſe to a good deal of diſputation and uneaſineſs: and caſes, involving this queſtion, have come before ſeveral of the higher counſils of the Preſbyterian church. Thoſe venerable bodies have diſcountenanced the practice, but have not given a very decided opinion on the ſubject; nor one which is likely to free the inferior judicatories from the perplexity formerly experienced.

With due ſubmiſſion and reſpect, I offer the following obſervations on the ſubject.

The deciſion of the queſtion depends entirely, I conceive, upon the opinion we form reſpecting another queſtion, viz. Whether our relations by affinity are to be conſidered as near-

ly related to us, as thoſe related in the ſame way by conſanguinity. Few, it is expected, will contend that it would be lawful for a man to marry the daughter of his own brother or ſiſter. If, therefore, our relations by affinity in the ſame degree, are to be viewed in a ſimilar light, it muſt be equally unlawful to marry the daughter of the brother or ſiſter of a former wife. Conſequently, if it is lawful to marry ſuch an one, it muſt be becauſe our relations by affinity are not as nearly related to us as thoſe related in the ſame degree by conſanguinity.

Reſpecting the queſtion laſt mentioned it is ſaid in the Confeſſion of Faith of the Preſbyterian church, chap· 24, ſec. 4, "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her huſband's kindred nearer in blood than of her own." This I believe is exactly the ſame with the civil law of the Romans, and the laws of all Chriſtian countries. The following are the words of the celebrated Mr. Hutchinſon in his moral philoſophy: "By the Roman law and the cuſtoms of all Chriſtians, marriage is prohibited to all within the fourth degree. And the degrees are thus computed: Perſons akin have had ſome common parent: and as many generations as have intervened on both ſides from this ſtock, ſo many are the degrees. In like manner, a man is prohibited to marry any ſuch kinſwoman of his former wife as of his own, to wit. within the fourth degree."

But theſe authorities, however reſpectable, will not afford entire ſatisfaction to inquiſitive minds. Such will wiſh to ſearch things to the bottom and judge for themſelves. It may be proper to proceed a ſtep further; and enquire, 1ſt. What appears to be the law of nature in the caſe? 2ndly. What is ſaid on the ſubject in the Scriptures? 1ſt. What is the law of nature? The following are the principle reaſons aſſigned by moral writers, why marriage ſhould not be between near relations.

1. Becauſe, if marriage were lawful to near relations, their frequent intercourſe would afford a ſtrong temptation to uncleanneſs;

2. If permitted, it would frequently confound or invert the duties of relations, by ſetting ſome above others whom they formerly uſed to obey.

3. Abſtaining from relations in this voluntary contract, extends the ſocial ties, and produces a greater number of family relations.

4. It is found from experience, that marriage between near relations, eſpecially if repeated, greatly weakens the human race, or, in other words, cauſes the ſpecies to degenerate.

The venerable Dr. Doddridge obſerves, that the reaſons above ſtated are much ſtronger againſt the marriage of blood relations than thoſe connected by affinity. But to me it appears, that this is true of the fourth reaſon only. The other three are nearly, or quite as ſtrong againſt the marriage of thoſe related by affinity. But under this head, it is of importance that we ſhould enquire whether it appears from the common ſentiments and feelings of mankind, that relation by affinity, is properly ſpeaking, any relation *at all*, or ſhould be, in any caſe, a barrier in the way of marriage. If it is not, then it would be lawful for a man to marry a woman, and after her deceaſe to marry her daughter by a former huſband. Or it would be lawful for a man to marry the widow of his ſon. Or for a ſon after the death of his father, to marry his ſtepmother. Againſt all theſe, nature appears at once to revolt. If then, relation by affinity renders a marriage in any caſe unlawful, where ſhall we ſtop? Or where ſhall we find a better rule than that laid down in the Confeſſion of Faith, and the Roman law, above quoted?

2. Let us enquire what is ſaid on the ſubject in the Scriptures. It is ſaid in Geneſis, and repeated by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, *That a man and his wife are one flesh.* Perhaps the beſt comment upon the ſtrong language here made uſe of, and indeed that which appears to have given riſe to it, is, the account we have of the formation of the woman from a part of the man. It would have been equally eaſy with the Almighty to have formed the woman of the duſt of the earth. Doing it in the way he did, was therefore, probably, deſigned to convey

ſome uſeful inſtruction; and ſo it appears to have been viewed by Adam. Upon the woman's being formed and bro't to him and he no doubt, acquainted with the circumſtances, he ſaid, '*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman; because she was taken out of man.*' And as an inference from the tranſaction, it is added, '*Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*' Further light appears to be caſt on this ſubject, by the Apoſtle in Epheſians, v. 21, '*So ought men to love their wives as* their own bodies.' *He that loveth his wife, loveth himself for no man ever yet hated his own flesh,*' &c. This paſſage, taken in connection with that before quoted, warrants us to conclude, that the union between a man and his wife, is as cloſe as can be between two perſons: that they are to be conſidered, as making up but one body: and that there is ſuch a unity of intereſt and feeling, that they are bound to pay the ſame reſpect to each other as to the members of their individual bodies. Conſidered in this light, it affords a moſt beautiful and intereſting view of the marriage relation. When a man enters into this connection, he thereby adopts all the relations of his wife. He partakes of her affections, ſympathies, and afflictions. He honors her parents, reſpects her brothers, ſiſters, &c. as his own. And in like manner, the woman adopts all the relations of her huſband. This appears to me to be the light in which the marriage union is repreſented in the Scriptures; and I conceive, it is the moſt correct and beautiful ever known amongſt men. Let me appeal to the feelings of every one of ſenſibility, who ſuſtains this relation, if it does not correſpond with their wiſhes and feelings. Is it not highly agreeable to the huſband to obſerve his wife joining with him in affection and reſpect to his relations? And can he feel ſatisfied if this is not the caſe? And is not the wife conſcious of the ſame with reſpect to her relations?—If the above repreſentation is juſt, if the huſband, partakes of his wife's relations in the ſame degree and to the ſame extent with his own; may we not conclude that he ſhould obſerve the ſame rule in contracting a ſecond marriage reſpecting her

relations, that he does reſpecting his own blood relations : and in like manner the woman, after the deceaſe of her huſband. Death diſſolves, indeed, the relation between the huſband and wife ; but it does not diſſolve their connection with each others relations. If it did it would be lawful for a man to marry his ſon's widow.

But the paſſage of Scripture which appears more deciſive on this ſubject is in Lev. xviii, 14, where a man is forbidden to uncover the nakedneſs of his aunt by affinity, viz. the wife of a father's brother deceaſed. The words are, ' *Thou ſhalt not uncover the nakedness of thy fathers brother, thou ſhalt not approach his wife, ſhe is thine aunt.*' By uncovering the nakedneſs here, there can be no doubt but marriage is intended. If it is not, the reſtrictions in this chapter only go to prohibit fornication between near relations. Admitting that marriage is intended, two queſtions may be raiſed on this paſſage, 1, Are the laws in the xviii. chapter of Leveticus now in force ? 2, If they are, does that in the 14th verſe, imply that a man is forbidden to marry his niece by affinity ?

As to the firſt queſtion, it is plain to me, from the third verſe of this chapter, and from the 24th verſe to the end of the ſame chapter, that theſe laws were given becauſe the things prohibited by them were in themſelves evil and contrary to the law of nature ; and not from any peculiarity in the Jewiſh polity. Conſequently that they are of perpetual obligation. The caſe ſeems to be different reſpecting the law in Deut. 25 which allows a man in a certain caſe to marry his brother's widow. The law laſt mentioned aroſe from a peculiarity in the ſyſtem of government. It was evidently deſigned to keep up the ſeveral tribes and families, and thereby preſerve the ſeveral inheritances diſtinct. This preſervation of the tribes was neceſſary until the coming of Chriſt, that the fulfilment of ſome of the prophecies reſpecting him might be manifeſt ; and particularly that in which it was foretold that he ſhould ſpring from the tribe of Judah. But all theſe things are now fulfilled, conſequently the law is no longer in force. Admitting

then that the laws in the xviii. of Leviticus are now in force; let us ſee ſecondly, whether that in the 14th verſe implies that a man ſhould not marry his niece by affinity.

Mr. Scott remarks on the table of kindred under conſideration, "It is obſervable, that the marriage of uncles with their nieces is not forbidden, though from the ſuppoſed parity of the caſe, it is forbidden in our law." That there is ſuch a parity in the caſe as is mentioned by Mr. Scott, I ſee no reaſon to doubt. If there is not, I ſhould be glad to ſee the diſparity pointed out; but it ſhould be particularly obſerved, that Mr. Scott's obſervation extends both to nieces by conſanguinity and affinity. There is no expreſs prohibition of either—In the 12th and 13th verſes, a man is forbidden to marry his aunt by conſanguinity; but nothing is ſaid reſpecting a niece marrying her uncle related in the ſame way. Yet few, it is expected, will contend that ſuch a marriage would be lawful; or that the parity of the caſe is not a ſufficient objection againſt it. In the 14th verſe a man is forbidden to marry his aunt by affinity, viz. the widow of his uncle: And why may we not conclude by the ſame parity as in the former caſe, that it is equally unlawful for an uncle to marry his niece by affinity?

In ſhort, if we do not admit ſuch a parity in the caſe, we muſt deny that the relation between uncle and niece is the ſame as that between nephew and aunt: And moreover, if we deny ſuch a parity, we muſt admit that it is lawful for a man to marry the daughter of his own brother or ſiſter. This I conceive is the light in which the paſſage under conſideration was viewed by the framers of the Confeſſion of Faith. And it is, I believe, the conſtruction which has been put upon it in all Chriſtian countries.

But were the evidence in this caſe more doubtful than it is, prudential conſiderations alone, would be ſufficient to deter one from forming ſuch a connection. In the preſent ſtate of the world, ſuch a connection can ſeldom or never be neceſſary; nor can it be more ſuitable in any reſpect than to marry ſome one amongſt the thouſands of thoſe who are not related

to us. Therefore, in abſtaining from ſuch connections we ſuſtain no injury, and are in no danger of erring. But on the other hand, if we enter into them no one can ſay but it may be wrong, and productive of evil to ourſelves and others.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON reading *the Virginia Religious Magazine*, my attention was particularly arreſted by an account of the death of two perſons, ſtated in the latter part of the 5th number. The one a ſage philoſopher, the other a female Chriſtian.

I have often thought, that by comparing the death of the Chriſtian with that of the infidel, obvious advantages would appear in favor of the religion of the croſs. It is not time to decide on the merits of a ſyſtem, when we have ſeen its influence but partially tryed. Syſtems may have ſomething in them flattering to human nature in proſperous circumſtances, but they are valuable only in proportion as they meet the condition of man in all his various exigencies. That which ſupports and comforts in the moſt trying and melancholy condition muſt be valuable. That which abandons the ſoul to horrors unknown before, ſhould certainly be adopted with caution.

In deſcriptions of the death of the righteous and the wicked, I have met with few, if any, where the picture is more ſtrikingly drawn, and the contraſt made more fully to appear, than in the death of the above perſons. The one is poſſeſt of every advantage, which is generally thought by the world, ſuited to alleviate the diſtreſſes of the mind on the near and certain approach of death. There is in man a propenſity to find out ſome antidote or remedy to every evil. As no complete remedy can be applied to repel the evil of death, they have had recourſe to ſuch things as appeared to them calculated to alleviate its diſtreſs. To this, have ſyſtems of philoſophy been applied—even ſtoical inſenſibility has been reſorted to, as the beſt way to eſcape the evil of what could not be avoided. Voltaire could now recur to conſiderations of a philoſophical kind, ſuited to remove, as far as ſuch were capa-

ble of removing, the impatience and dread of death. Beſides his diſciples and admirers, who through life looked up to him as ſuperior and chief, were preſent with him. Their attachment to him as well as the honor of their ſcheme, would no doubt induce them to uſe every exertion to give him conſolation. Every artifice would, doubtleſs, be employed to feed his vanity, as well as to ſuppreſs every painful apprehenſion.

Being a man, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that he poſſeſſed a greater ſhare of fortitude in danger, than what is commonly the portion of the female part of the world. But, with all theſe pillars, he ſinks in the hour of death! Diſmayed and confounded, he then exhibits all the *weakness* of human nature. Bereſt of all comforts he wears out with the horrors of his approaching doom. From dread of death and eternity, he doubly dies. How different the condition of the other. Unverſed in ſyſtems of philoſophy, ſhe triumphs in the proſpects of immortality, the terror and diſmay of the other. Poſſeſſing, no doubt, all the timidity and weakneſs of her ſex, ſhe exhibits a patience and calm fortitude, unknown either to the hero or the philoſopher. I own indeed, that impatience may ſometimes be miſtaken for fortitude. Under keen diſtreſs and anguiſh men are anxious for a change; if none elſe ſeems probable, they may even long for death, that they may ſleep in inſenſibility. What men feel *now* they generally feel moſt ſenſibly; and death, the very king of terrors, may be ignorantly deſired from an impatience of preſent ſufferings. But this ſuppoſition muſt be groundleſs in the preſent caſe. Impatience has no place here. She exhibits the ſame tranquility of ſoul and ſubmiſſion to God when the ſymptoms of her approaching end were ſo ſlight as only to produce a ſuſpicion of their real nature; no keen diſtreſs was then impelling her to deſire death; nor even in the ſevereſt anguiſh, does her language betray impatience, but is full of pious reſignation to the will of God. The contraſt between theſe two is ſtriking in life, but it receives its finiſhing touch in death.—To what are we then to attribute the difference? To the influence of truth—the truth of the goſpel—its conſoling promiſes—its animating

proſpects, in compariſon with which, earthly pomp and grandeur ſink out of ſight, and in compariſon with which nothing in exiſtence is more deſirable.

How ought we then to admire that goodneſs which has unveiled eternity to man, ſo as to carry his views beyond the narrow limits of time, and even animate him with the proſpect of dying.—How conſoling thoſe truths which need neither philoſophy nor natural fortitude to aid them in the ſupport of the ſoul in death! But for thoſe, eternity only, would have taught the things of itſelf, and that in a manner not to cheer, but to ſurpriſe and confound a guilty world; conjecture would have been ſpent in vain; God and eternity would ſtill have been ſhrouded in impenetrable night—man would have died in darkneſs and have riſen in diſpair.—But when God reveals himſelf, all is eaſy, all is plain. When the Goſpel ſhines, life and immortality are brought to light—This makes us know ourſelves as well as inſtructs us in the ways of God. By this we ſee the path that leads to life, never diſcovered by human ſight alone, and by this are we taught to ſhun the road that leads to deſtruction.

How blind to his own intereſt is he who rejects this ſource of the moſt important information to man, and chooſes darkneſs rather than light—Such reap the dreadful reward of their infatuation and wickedneſs. Darkneſs follows them to the grave and leaves the benighted ſoul to enter eternity without a ray of hope. The condition of ſuch is both to be dreaded and pitied—we ſhould cautiouſly ſhun their courſe if we would eſcape their end.—The way to *die the death* of the righteous is firſt to *live the life* of the righteous.—For this the Goſpel is the only and complete director—"Search the Scriptures,"—Let us live by faith upon their promiſes, and they will always be found a ſufficient ſupport in times of trial—They will refreſh the heart like "the ſhadow of a great rock in a thirſty land." When fear ſhall ſurpriſe the hypocrite in death, theſe remove the diſtreſſes of the pious ſoul, and enable him calmly to deſcend to the grave, with a firm belief of a glorious reſurrection.

R.

FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S MAGAZINE.

REMARKS ON THE LATE REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

THE glory of Chriſt and the ſucceſs of his kingdom, of all things lie neareſt to the heart of a chriſtian while he lives and acts in character; and this does not depend on one or two, but on many cauſes. We are told in prophecy, that his people ſhall dwell alone, and ſhall not be reckoned among the nations; and by our Lord, that they are not of the world, but that he has choſen them out of the world, and therefore the world hates them. It is therefore perfectly natural to ſee their attention much engaged with what we have heard for years paſt from ſo many diſtant parts of our country, of a revival of religion and the oppoſition made to it; nor is it ſtrange to ſee a vaſt difference of opinions. This emboldens me to give my opinion very briefly through your magazine; and I have in my eye, not the profane and ignorant, who care for none of theſe things, but rather very many who think all they hear is new, ſtrange and out of the common way in which they have been uſed to hear, think and ſpeak, and therefore doubtful; and it is true that there has not been any very great or uncommon revival of religion here within the memories of moſt who are now living. But if we think a moment, I preſume we ſhall all agree that the converſion of any ſinner is, in a certain ſenſe, a miracle. Now can any thing be more weak or wrong, than to lay down a uniform rule how that is to be done which is quite above nature? Yet this is the very diſpoſition of human nature. It is never ſo ardent to do any thing as that which cannot be done, either in ſpiritual or temporal things; witneſs the long purſuit after the diſcovery of a perpetual motion, &c. But ſay ſome, falling down and crying out, we do not underſtand. I ſuppoſe neither did the apoſtle Paul until after he did fall and riſe again; nor the jailer who fell at his feet afterwards; the Pſalmiſt was made to roar through the diſquietneſs of his heart, and Habakkuk quivered and rottenneſs

entered into his bones. Now, what if theſe peculiar circumſtances had not happened to them? theſe things in themſelves were not their converſion; the want of them would not have hindered it, had it pleaſed God to ſubſtitute ſomething in their place, There was fire, ſtorm and earthquake, but the Lord was not in them, yet they went before the ſtill ſmall voice. If we read the accounts of the converſion of Luther, Junius, Beza, Bolton, Latimer, and Halyburton, we ſhall find many peculiarities for which no Scripture examples can be given. But will any man ſay for want of that all was a deluſion with them? I preſume not. But ſay ſome, a diviſion has taken place in Kentucky among the friends of this work, it will all end where it began. But how would it have done if the church had objected to the Apoſtles becauſe they once had a thief and a traitor among them? or to John, the laſt of them, becauſe a party went out from him that never truly bolonged to him? There are a few in Kentucky caſt out of the church, or rather, who have caſt themſelves out; but it is weak if not wicked to ſtrive to attach their folly and weakneſs to the church to which they once belonged. He would be counted a bad farmer that would reject his wheat becauſe he found it mingled with tares and chaff. I am far from thinking well of many irregularities that have taken place in many parts of our country, but was it ever otherwiſe on a like occaſion? I preſume one great reaſon of the diverſity of opinion on this ſubject is, the church is at preſent unhappily divided and ſubdivided, and it is natural for all to think beſt of the party to which they belong, and be the dividing line ever ſo ſmall, let it be real or imaginary, a molehill will ſoon become a mountain, and whatever may take place beyond their own pale is immediately ſuſpected. Can any good come out of Nazareth? and prejudiced people generally converſe with and draw their information from thoſe of the ſame caſt with themſelves. The teſtimony being thus partial and exparte, a true verdict cannot be expected. If ſuch people perceive an intimation, though no larger than Elijah's cloud at firſt appeared, yet it will ſoon overſpread and darken all their horizon, notwithſtanding the favourable accounts we

have had from many wiſe and learned men in very diſtant parts, as well as in many inſtances from the very enemies of the work themſelves. Some well-meaning people doubt, becauſe it ſeems of ſhort duration in ſome places; but I humbly think a ſovereign God is in nothing more ſo than in his works of grace and mercy. It is not his ordinary way to keep his people long with a full cup in their hand.

God went up from Abraham in the place where he talked with him, and Peter was but a ſhort while on the mount untill he did not know what he was ſaying, and his maſter had much to ſay to his diſciples on a certain occaſion but they could not then bear it. Upon the whole it is a good caution given us in 1ſt Cor. 4. and 5. '*Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come*,' and it deſerves notice, that there are none ſo apt to judge others as thoſe who are remiſs in judging themſelves.

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From the Aſſembly's Magazine.

ANTIQUITIES.

WHATEVER has a tendency to promote religious knowledge, will at all times be acceptable to thoſe, who have the direction of this periodical work, eſpecially as it comes ſo immediately within the letter of their inſtructions from the General Aſſembly, under whoſe patronage it has been begun. To this end every thing that tends to explain the practices and ancient cuſtoms of the church of God under the Jewiſh or Chriſtian diſpenſation, and of courſe, to make the New-Teſtament better underſtood, will readily command a diſtinguiſhed place in our Magazine.

At preſent, we ſhall introduce this ſubject by explaining the principal feaſts or feſtivals of the Jews, being ſolemn days ſet apart for the honor and ſervice of God, either as a memorial of ſome ſignal deliverance received by the ſpecial interpoſition of his providence, or to keep alive the remembrance of ſome

ſevere puniſhment inflicted fortheir tranſgreſſions and diſobedience. The firſt kind were generally termed Sabbaths or Reſts, and on which they offered euchariſtical ſacrifices, with a joyful and innocent exemption from labour. Thoſe of the other ſort, were days of faſting and atonement. In all their religious ceremonies there were ſpecial and particular proviſions, by which they were diſtinguiſhed, in the cleareſt manner, from the idolitrous practices of the Heathen Nations.

Some of theſe feaſts and faſts were held by divine, and ſome by human authority. Thoſe of the firſt ſort, at leaſt the moſt ſolemn of them, were the Paſſover, the Penticoſt, and the feaſt of Tabernacles. Theſe were annual feaſts, and were celebrated only at Jeruſalem, when all the male Iſraelites were obliged to appear, unleſs they had the beſt reaſons for their abſence. The duration of their celebration was different; ſome feaſts were held for one day, and others for a whole week. Thoſe that laſted a week had ſome days more ſolemn than the reſt. The holieſt, were called the great or good days—vid. John vii. 37. During theſe feſtivals, the parts of the ſacrifices that were to be eaten, and the Shew-bread, were divided among the twenty-four courſes of Prieſts. Criminals were by law to be executed at theſe feſtivals, that their puniſhment might have a proper effect on all. The Jews, therefore, were not reſtrained by their law, in fearing to put Jeſus to death during the feaſt, leſt the people ſhould make a diſturbance.

The feaſt of the Paſſover anſwers to the Eaſter obſerved by ſome Chriſtians, and was inſtituted in Egypt on the Angel's paſſing over the houſes of the Iſraelites and ſparing their firſt born, while thoſe of the Egyptians were univerſally ſlain. The Lamb offered on this occaſion was called the Paſchal Lamb and the Paſſover. St. Paul calls Jeſus Chriſt our Paſſover or Paſchal Lamb. 1. Cor. v. 7. The Paſſover was alſo called the feaſt of Unleavened-bread, becauſe it was eaten on this occaſion, and no other, on pain of death. This was peculiarly applicable to the ſecond day of the feaſt, or the 15th day of the month.

The particulars of this feaſt, conſiſted in the killing and eating of the Paſchal Lamb—the Unleavened-bread, and offering up a handful of Barley, called the Omer.

At all the feaſts, and eſpecially at the Paſſover, great numbers of victims, beſides the Lamb, were offered up. The fleſh of theſe was firſt ſerved up at this feaſt, on which the Iſraelites ſupped, and afterwards eat the Paſchal Lamb, of which it was ſufficient that each perſon ate a piece of the ſize of an olive. This Lamb was called the *body* of the Paſſover, to diſtinguiſh it from the *entrails* and the *blood* that were offered upon the Altar. Thus Chriſt diſtinguiſhed, when he emphatically ſaid '*this is my Body*,' that is, it is not merely an emblem of the Paſchal Lamb which was itſelf but a figure, but an emblem of my body, who am the real ſacrifice ſignified by the Paſſover. The Lamb was killed on the 14th day of the month between three o'clock in the afternoon and ſun ſet, during which time our Lord expired on the croſs. After the Lamb was ſlain the blood was ſprinkled on the Altar, and the fat and entrails conſumed; the Lamb was then returned to the offerer to be eaten in his family. It was to be thoroughly roaſted and not boiled, and not a bone of it was to be broken. When the family was not large enough to eat the whole, (for every one was to partake, freemen and ſlaves, men and women) the maſter invited others to partake with him. Theſe were called brethren, companions and friends—Hence the ſevere rebuke of our Lord to Judas, when he called him friend or companion.

The gueſts leaned on their left arms upon beds round a table, on which the Lamb was ſet—alſo they had bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and a diſh full of a thick ſauce, to repreſent the mortar which they uſed to make bricks of in Egypt, generally made of dryed dates and figs. The mode of eating, lying on the arm, and reſting ſometimes on each others boſoms, was conſidered emblematic of their reſt from their ſlavery, and alſo a ſign of the equality and perfect union of the gueſts—Thus we read of Abraham's boſom and the Son's being in the boſom of the Father.

When the guests were seated, the master took a cup of wine and water, and gave thanks to God, and then drank it, after which he gave to each one a cup, which they were obliged to drink—Thus Christ says '*drink ye all of it.*' Afterwards they ate the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, dipped in the sauce or mixture. Then another cup, attended with thanksgiving, was drunken, when they ate again. Lastly the Paschal Lamb was eaten, and then they drank another cup, which was called the cup of blessing. The whole ceremony ended with a fourth cup and singing a psalm, called by Mark a hymn.

On the next day, after the feast of unleavened bread, on the 16th day of March, they offered up to God on the altar, the homer or gomer of oats and barley (which was a sheaf of the grain) with great ceremony.

The second feast of the Jews, was the Pentecost; so called because it was kept fifty days after that of unleavened bread, or the 15th of March, which corresponds with our Whitsuntide. It was also called the Feast of weeks, because it was kept seven weeks after the Passover, and the feast of harvest, became the first fruits of the wheat harvest, were then offered, also seven Lambs of that year, one Calf and two Rams for a burnt offering. The design of this feast was, to oblige the Israelites to repair to the temple of the Lord, there to acknowledge his absolute dominion over the whole land, and to offer him the first fruits of their harvest; and farther that they might render thanks to God for the law given on Mount Sinai on the 50th day after coming out of Egypt. This feast lasted but one day, and was accompanied with many sacrifices, offerings, and libations, with great mirth and rejoicing. It was on this day that the Holy Ghost miraculously descended on the Apostles, and thus confirmed the new Law or Gospel of our Lord.

The feast of Tabernacles, so called because the people dwelt in tents or tabernacles, and which corresponds with our Christmas, lasted seven or rather eight days, and began on the fifteenth day of the month Tisri; which answers to parts of our September and October, and by many is supposed to be the true time of our Saviour's birth. It took its rise from the Is-

raelites having dwelt in tents or tabernacles while they were in the defert, or elfe, as fome fuppofe, in remembrance of the building of the tabernacle. The defign of this feaft was alfo to give thanks for the fruits of the vine, as well as of other trees, that were gathered at this time ; and to beg God's blefſing on thofe of the enfuing year. This feaft was accompanied with the greateft rejoicing, becaufe they then prayed with particular earneſtneſs and zeal for the Meſſiah's coming.

They were obliged to dwell, all the time of the feaft in tents, uſually on the tops of their houſes. They daily offered abundance of ſacrifices—They carried in their hands branches of Palm Trees, Olives, Citrons, and ſinging Hoſannas—that is '*Save I beseech thee.*' By which words, out of the 18th Pſalm, they prayed for the coming of the Meſſiah. In this manner was Chriſt conducted into Jeruſalem by the believing Jews, who looking upon him as the promiſed Meſſiah, expreſſed an uncommon joy upon finding in him the accompliſhment of thoſe petitions which they had ſo often put up to heaven at this feaſt.

They walked every day round the Altar, with theſe branches in their hands ſinging Hoſanna's and during which, the trumpets ſounded on all ſides. But on the 7th day, they went ſeven times round the Altar, and this was called the great Hoſanna. To this laſt ceremony St. John ſeems to allude in the Revelations, when the Saints are repreſented as ſtanding round the throne of the Lamb with Palms in their hands, and ſinging '*Salvation cometh from God and the Lamb.*'

The moſt remarkable ceremony performed at this feaſt was, libations or pouring out of the water, which was done every day. This water was drawn by the Prieſt from the Pool of Siloam, and was poured on the Altar, at the morning ſacrifice, the people ſinging, in the words of the Prophet Iſaiah, '*with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*' The Jews themſelves, ſuppoſed this water to be emblematic of the Holy Ghoſt, therefore Jeſus Chriſt, on the laſt day of the feaſt, cried to the people, '*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath*

said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, but this spake he of the spirit, which they who believe on him, should recive.' On this occaſion, they teſtified the greateſt joy and rejoicings, and the whole was very expreſſive of the publiſhing the glad tidings of ſalvation through the expected Meſſiah, and the pouring out of the holy ſpirit on believers.

Z.

SELECTED.

ON THE TRUE DIGNITY OF MAN.

IT has been objected againſt Chriſtianity, that it exhibits degrading views of human nature, injurious to virtue, inasmuch as they generate a mean and abject ſtate of mind, and extinguiſh that generous pride, as it is called, which is the incentive to worthy actions. This is one proof, among many, that Chriſtianity is little underſtood by thoſe who oppoſe it. A ſmall part of it only is known; and from hence concluſions are drawn as if it formed the whole.

It is true that Chriſtianity exhibits man as fallen very low; but is it not alſo true, that its proper end is highly to exalt him? It repreſents him, indeed, as degraded even unto hell: but does it not propoſe, as its very object, to raiſe him up to heaven? How dignified do the Scriptures deſcribe him to have been in his origin! His ſoul inſpired by the breath of the Almighty! This beauteous globe contrived and faſhioned for his habitation! Every other order of creatures ſubjected to him as Lord of all! He himſelf made capable of holding converſe with his God, and actually admitted to his familiar intimacy and friendſhip! Are not theſe grand ideas? But one unſpeakably more grand is yet to be mentioned. '*God ſo loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that we might not perish, but have everlaſting life.*' Aſtoniſhing and dignifying conſideration! The eternal Son of God, equal with the

Father, assumes our nature ! Values us so highly, as thus to humble himself, that we might be exalted ; and submits to death, that we might live ! rises again from the dead ; ascends to heaven ; and seats human nature on the very throne of God ! In that nature receives the adoration of all the heavenly hosts ; and officiates as our advocate in the court of heaven ! entitles us to be called, like himself, sons of God ; and, sending forth his divine Spirit, purifies our fallen nature, and makes it meet for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ! To these contemplations let every meaner thought give way ; and if we boast, let us boast of that which constitutes our real dignity—let us boast of our religion and our Redeemer.

The unbeleiver may, perhaps, call all this enthusiasm, and deem it no better than a visionary fable. But this being *Christianity*, he is bound either to shew us that human nature is more exalted on some other scheme, or to renounce his objection.

THE CELEBRATED OBJECTION OF MR. HUME TO THE MIRACLES OF THE GOSPEL.

WHEN the defenders of Christianity thought they had established the evidences of the miraculous history of our Saviour upon foundations which could no longer be shaken, the ingenious Mr. Hume invented an argument which revived the spirits of vanquished infidelity, and has since been triumphantly urged by all the enemies of religion, as irrefragable, and decisive against every proof that can possibly be alledged in favour of divine revelation. His celebrated argument is this,—That miracles are, in their own nature, incredible, and that, therefore, no testimony can verify them. The only rational foundation of our belief of what has ever happened, or what can happen in the world is our own *experience* of what does

conſtantly take place in the courſe of nature. Men may be falſe, or may be deceived, but nature never changes. As we, then, have had no experience of any miraculous changes in the order of the world, it is unreaſonable to believe that any have ever exiſted, whatever may be the number, or the character of the men by whom they are atteſted.—This reaſoning was eſteemed by thoſe who were inclined to reject divine revelation, to be unanſwerable, and, for a moment, it ſeemed to its friends to be the moſt formidable attack which had yet been made on the authenticity of the ſacred ſcriptures. It has ſince, however, been vigorouſly repelled, and I think effectually overthrown by many pious and excellent writers, and by none with more ſkill and force than by Biſhop Watſon in his letter on this ſubject to Mr. Gibbon.

But, it appears to me that Mr. Hume's redoubted argument may be deſtroyed by a proceſs more ſimple and obvious than moſt of thoſe which have hitherto been employed againſt it. And a plain, conciſe, and popular refutation of ſuch an adverſary, whoſe writings are in the hands of almoſt all young perſons, may anſwer ſome of the valuable ends contemplated by your Magazine.

On Mr. Hume's principle, that no miracle is credible becauſe it is contrary to our experience of the uniformity of the courſe of nature, it would be impoſſible for God to make any revelation of his will to the world, diſtinct from the ſtructure of the world itſelf, whatever reaſons for it might exiſt in the ſtate of human nature. Such a revelation would itſelf be a miracle, whether made to mankind immediately by a voice from heaven, or by the more humble inſtrumentality of prophets and apoſtles. And, if by the agency of the latter, their divine miſſion could be authenticated only by ſuch works of omnipotence as would be a ſufficient demonſtration to the world that the ſpirit of God accompanied and inſtructed them. This is a conſequence of the principle, I am aware, not at all alarming to thoſe by whom it is urged, but rather a ſubject of their triumph. But, I truſt, there are few reaſonable and ſerious men who are willing to ſay that it is impoſſible for God to

make any extraordinary communication of his will to his erring and miſerable creatures.

But, I add, that this principle leads to atheiſm—acted upon to its full extent it would reſiſt all improvements in ſcience,—it refutes itſelf.

It leads to atheiſm. For if our own experience of the uniformity of nature is the ſole teſt of a reaſonable belief concerning whatever has been, or whatever ſhall be, in the hiſtory of the world, it is impoſſible that the world ſhould ever have had a beginning, it is impoſſible that it ſhould ever have an end. It muſt have exiſted, it muſt continue to exiſt, eternally in the ſame order in which we now behold it. There can be no future ſtate of exiſtence, no future judgment, no future retribution to the virtuous and the wicked; for theſe are all contrary to our experience; there can be, therefore, no foundation for religion. The world, eternal in its own nature, muſt exiſt independent on any intelligent and omnipotent cauſe. But the only proof of the being of God is derived from the wiſe order and harmony of the world; and if this is order eternal and uncreated, it would at leaſt be unphiloſophical to ſuppoſe the exiſtence of a Deity who would then be a ſuperfluous and unneceſſary apendage to the univerſe. We muſt receive the abſurd idea of an eternal ſucceſſion of mutable and periſhing beings governed only by their own internal and immutable laws. We muſt believe, that there is no God, or embrace the old Ariſtotelian hypotheſis, which is but one ſtep removed from atheiſm, that the univerſe itſelf is God.

Theſe conſequences flow ſo obviouſly from the principle, that I have been ſurpriſed not to find them urged with more point and force than they have been by the friends and defenders of chriſtianity. Indeed, I have ſcarcely ſeen them touched except tranciently by the judicious and ingenious Dr. Allen.* They are conſequences, however, which, though not

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* *A celebrated French Refugee in England, in his reflections on the books of the sacred Scriptures.* [See next page.

diſpleaſing to a part of the followers of Mr. Hume, yet, I truſt, were never contemplated by the greater portion of them. Atheiſm has not yet become ſo faſhionable in Great-Britain. And if they are, as I believe, the genuine reſults of the principles, they muſt be deciſive againſt it in the opinion of every pious and virtuous man.

Another conſequence of this principle, though not ſo groſs and impious as the former, tends not leſs to demonſtrate its abſurdity ;—it would, if acted upon to its full extent, arreſt all improvements in ſcience. Permit me, by a familiar example to illuſtrate and confirm this propoſition. When firſt the effects of the electric or magnetic influence were diſcovered, how ought all philoſophers, on this ground, if, on this ground a philoſopher could have ever exiſted, to have treated the hiſtory of them? preciſely as infidels have treated the hiſtory of the goſpel, rejected them inſtantly, and without examination, as abſurd and impoſſible, becauſe contrary to all their *experience*. Do you ſay let them repeat the ſame experiments by which theſe new powers in nature were originally diſcovered? But, if the principle which we are combating be certain and infallible, a wiſe man could have no motive for making the experiment, ſince his own paſt experience of the courſe of nature is the criterion of whatever is poſſible, or credible. Even if he ſhould repeat the experiment, I do not know whether he could conſiſtently admit the teſtimony of his ſenſes to a new fact ; certainly not the teſtimony of other perſons. And what are the greater portion of mankind to do, who have neither the ſkill nor the means of experimenting?

Let us take another example where no counter experience can poſſibly be applied. The inhabitants of a torrid climate never can have the effects of froſt made obvious to their ſen-

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This work was published in London, 1688 *; and shews that the objection of Mr. Hume to the evidences of christianity, is not novel, but has only been set in a new and stronger light by that ingenious writer.*

ſes. Congelation is as great a myſtery to them as any myſtery or miracle of the chriſtian religion. According to this favourite maxim of infidelity, then, they ought never to believe it, and the king of Siam acted right in puniſhing the Dutch navigator for attempting to inſult his underſtanding by incredible ſtories, who aſſured him that in Holland, during part of the year, water became ſufficiently hard to bear men, and carriages drawn by horſes, upon its ſurface. If teſtimony, then, were under no circumſtances, ſufficient to vouch to us, facts which not only are not conformable, but which, in many inſtances, are wholly contrary to all our paſt experience, ſcience muſt be arreſted in the very commencement of its progreſs. This conſequence was, certainly, not adverted to by the ingenious writer who invented, or gave its preſent form, to the principle againſt which we contend. But, when we are teſting the merit of a principle, if it is not found to hold univerſally, or co-extenſively with the latitude of its terms, it ought to be rejected. For, by what rule ſhall we apply it only to the facts of religion, when it is found abſolutely falſe in its application to the facts of ſcience?

I maintain, in the laſt place, that this celebrated argument, drawn from our experience of the uniformity of nature, refutes itſelf. For, if the phyſical courſe of nature, on which the argument reſts, is found to be ſtable and uniform, the moral order of things appears to be not leſs ſteady and invariable. If the former of theſe facts, upon Mr. Hume's principle, ſtands in the way of the admiſſion of any miraculous hiſtory, the latter, upon the ſame ground, forbids the rejection of the hiſtory, if, by rejecting it, we muſt contradict all the moral phenomena of human nature. Admitting, then, what can hardly be denied by the bittereſt enemies of religion, that the apoſtles and evangeliſts were men of the ſoundeſt underſtanding,* and

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* *The perfection of the moral ſyſtem publiſhed by theſe humble fiſhermen, ſo far excelling all the philoſophy of their age, demonſtrates, that either they were inſpired from above, to admit*

the moſt upright hearts, it is contrary to all that we know of the motives of conduct among mankind, that, for the ſake of propagating a moſt improbable impoſture, they ſhould voluntarily ſubmit to inceſſant toils and extreme ſufferings, they ſhould abandon honour, intereſt, family, all that is uſually accounted moſt dear to the human heart, and march with intrepidity through perpetual perſecutions to certain death, inflicted in the moſt excrutiating and dreadful forms. They were evidently not frantic in their writings, which are always rational and ſimple, and in which there appears to be no tincture of enthuſiaſm ; yet they yielded all their original prejudices, and all their hopes from a triumphant Meſſiah, to their deep conviction of the divine miſſion, and the miraculous power of a ſuffering Maſter, for whom they encountered every actual evil, and every poſſible hazard. If, then, we ſhould ſuppoſe, with the objectors, that the goſpel is not true, here are contradictions to the moral order of things, that is, to all the ordinary principles of conduct among men which have ever occurred to our *experience* in other caſes, not leſs wonderful, and out of the courſe of nature, than the miracles themſelves for which the apoſtles, and companions of our Lord, and witneſſes of his life, made ſuch aſtoniſhing and almoſt incredible ſacrifices.*

This ſo much vaunted objection, then, againſt the miracles of the goſpel evidently refutes itſelf, inaſmuch as in its application to the eſtabliſhed moral order of things it contradicts the concluſion which the enemies of religion have ſo triumph-

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which, is yielding the question, or they were men of superior minds to the profoundest writers of Greece or Rome. Which is yielding almost as much.

* *Some men have encountered great dangers, and endured great sufferings even for an erroneous opinion; but there is a wide difference between dying for* an opinion, *and in attestation of* a fact.

antly drawn from their phyſical order. This particular view of the ſubject merits, and, to give it its full force, would require a more extenſive elucidation. But, that I might not encumber your Magazine, I have choſen to repreſent it with all the conciſeneſs which I thought in any way conſiſtent with perſpicuity. It ought to carry with it the greater conviction to the objectors, ſince they equally ſubject the natural and the moral world to the laws of neceſſity, ſo that the ordinary and natural motives of human conduct muſt be thoſe alſo, which are certain and neceſſary. S.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON INFIDELITY, NO. III:

Incredulus, Odi. Hor.

ANOTHER objection, frequently made by the enemies of Chriſtianity, is, that the Bible contains ſo many ſtrange ſtories; ſo many myſteries, incomprehenſible doctrines, that no man, who exerciſes his reaſon, can believe it to be the word of God. And we very often hear Chriſtians termed credulous, ſuperſtitious fools, fanatics, enthuſiaſts, and many other coarſe indelicate names, which it is needleſs to mention, as I by no means deſign to expoſe Unbelievers, by collecting into one diſguſting groupe all the railing accuſations, and bitter words which have been ſpoken againſt the followers of Jeſus.

It would be eaſy to ſhow that this objection is invalid; and that the greateſt ſceptics that ever lived, have believed a thouſand things as much above their comprehenſion as the moſt myſterious points in Chriſtianity. Indeed the fact is, that every man, every day that he lives, without the leaſt heſitaion, believes things, that he cannot comprehend. There is no need of inducing particulars here; every man's obſervation will ſuggeſt inſtances enough. Should any one, however,

doubt the truth of what is aſſerted, let him recollect what he always has believed reſpecting the production of plants; the nouriſhment of his own body by food, or any of the moſt common proceſſes of nature and he will at once perceive, that he is perpetually ſurrounded with myſtery. And if theſe things be ſo, the objection will appear to be without force; unleſs it is pretended, that in all the works of God we are to expect myſterious, incomprehenſible points; but that in a revelation from Him, every thing is to be perfectly on a level with our narow capacities. But it is not my intention to urge this anſwer to the objection. This would be only repeating what has often been ſaid before. What I mean to ſhow, is, that Infidels in reſpect to religion, are at leaſt as credulous as thoſe whom they are daily in the practice of ridiculing for their credulity.

It may be remarked here, that men are frequently impoſed upon by names. Unbelievers have ſtiled themſelves philoſophers; and multitudes have allowed the title; they have ridiculed Chriſtians for their eaſy faith, and many have ſuppoſed that no man could be a Chriſtian, without being an eaſy credulous fool. But let us examine this point a little. He is a real philoſopher, who on every ſubject proportions his aſſent to the evidence: he is credulous, who believes without ſufficient evidence. He underſtands the right uſe of reaſon, who balances difficulties on every ſide, and chooſes the leaſt; he is either unfair, or ignorant who rejects at once without examination, whatever carries the appearance of difficulty. With theſe obſervations before us, let us examine what right unbelievers have to aſſume to themſelves. the title of *men of reaſon, and philoſophy;* and reproach Chriſtians with ſuperſtition, and credulity, and I know not what.

I ſhall in the firſt place notice thoſe who ſtand higheſt in the ranks of Scepticiſm: thoſe I mean, who profeſs to believe that there is no God. Now theſe men either believe that the world exiſted from eternity; or elſe, that it ſprung up by chance. He who ſuppoſes the firſt, believes the abſurdity of an infinite ſucceſſion of finite beings. He who admits the ſecond, muſt

believe that an effect can be produced without an adequate cauſe, or in fact, that an effect is produced by nothing at all. Now whether this is proportioning aſſent to evidence, I leave every man to judge. In the ſame way, let it be determined whether a man who can believe in this way, has any right to laugh at the Chriſtian for his credulity.

The account given by Moſes of the creation of the world, and the chronology of the ſame author, has been a copious ſubject for the exerciſe of infidel wit, with one voice it has been rejected, and this, as is pretended, for want of evidence. But let us hear what theſe ſcrupulous philoſophers ſay on this ſubject. And let one ſpeak for all. A very great philopher, and unbeliever, who cannot believe what Moſes wrote, is perſuaded that a great many years ago —nobody knows when—by ſome volcano in the ſun, this earth was thrown out, boiling like lava from a burning mountain, and ſome how or other—nobody knows how—was ſet in motion round the ſun ; and after a very long lapſe of years—nobody knows how long—having gradually become cool, it was covered with vegetable mould, after which, trees, and all kinds of plants, and finally men, ſprouted up from the ſoil. Now this is all mighty fine and philoſophical ; and men who receive it are philoſophers of courſe. But we, who ſee evidences of the truth of the Moſaic hiſtory in the ſtate of the world, in the hiſtory of paſt ages, in the reaſonableneſs of his account, and in many other things, are credulous fools. I could mention ſeveral other curious, and laughable fables, which theſe ſame philoſophers have invented on this ſubject, did I not fear that this would give too ludicrous an air to my paper, and I rather apprehend too, that the ſimple unlettered Chriſtian, credulous as he is, would hardly be perſuaded that grave men, and philoſophers, doubting, heſitating, ſcrupulous, unbelieving philoſophers, can believe ſuch ſtrange ſtories.

But let us proceed, and we ſhall find farther proofs of the wonderful credulity of unbelievers. There are Chriſtians now in the world ; and it is as firmly eſtabliſhed as any hiſtori-

cal fact can be, that the author of this ſect lived about eighteen hundred years ago in the land of Judea; and ſuffered death under the procuratorſhip of Pontius Pilate. And yet a late writer* againſt Chriſtianity pretends, that originally this ſyſtem was nothing more than the worſhip of the ſun under the name of Chris-en! I know not whether any have received this notion: it however is probable that they have: and they would have Chriſtians to believe it too. Indeed they muſt excuſe us. We cannot be ſo credulous. Tacitus, an ancient enemy of our religion, is much more worthy of credit. "Auctor nominis ejus, (ſays he, ſpeaking of Chriſtians) Chriſtus, qui "Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, "ſupplicis affectus erat—Chriſt the author of this ſect, who, "in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by the procurator "Pontius Pilate." But it is needleſs to produce proofs of this point: let us proceed. It is certain too that Chriſt left but few diſciples upon the earth; and, that they were the inſtruments of ſpreading this religion through the civilized world, in the ſpace of three centuries. Here ariſes a very important queſtion for ſolution. By what means this religion was thus rapidly ſpread through the world? The Chriſtian thinks that nothing but the interpoſing power of God could have brought about this event; the Unbeliever attributes it to prieſtcraft, to fraud, and to various other cauſes. Let us examine this matter a little. If any adequate cauſe, but the interpoſition of Heaven, can be aſſigned, then I will admit that Chriſtians are as credulous as they are repreſented; but if not, I think that we ought to hear no more of the eaſy faith of the diſciples of Chriſt. Before we proceed to this examination, I beg leave to make a remark, which, perhaps, may appear paradoxical. It is this, that the moſt credulous are not always the eaſieſt to be convinced, Thus for the ſake of example, thoſe, who by philoſophers, and generally, and ſcornfully enough too, denominated the Vulgar, and who are pro-

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* *Volney.*

verbially credulous, ſo ſtrongly believe that the earth is at reſt in the center of the univerſe, and that the Sun and Stars revolve round it, that no reaſoning of the philoſopher, however cogent, can convince them of the error. A thouſand inſtances of this kind might be adduced. One more only ſhall be brought forward, not taken from ſubjects of philoſophy, but from common life. There are now in this country multitudes of people who put as much confidence in what are called *signs*, as ever a ſuperſtitious heathen did in his *omens:* ſuch, for inſtance, as ſtumbling when one is going out of doors, having ſalt ſpilt towards one when at table, being croſſed in the road by certain kinds of animals. And all the reaſoning in the world will never convince them that this is mere folly. Now the true cauſe of this I imagineis not the want of capacity to underſtand the reaſoning in either caſe, for it is very obvious; but the contrary opinion is ſo ſtrongly impreſſed on their minds, that it entirely excludes the truth, and it may be ſaid *that through excessive credulity they will not believe.* In the ſame way I apprehend that multitudes have in ſome way or other, they ſcarcely know how, taken up the notion that Chriſtianity is a ſtrange myſterious unaccountable thing, entirely repugnant to all reaſon and philoſophy; and this opinion ſo ſtrongly poſſeſſes them, that the moſt cogent arguments are entirely without effect, and they may be ſaid to be infidels, through exceſſive credulity. Under the influence of this temper they will ſwallow as great abſurdities as were ever imputed to Chriſtianity by its moſt inveterate enemies. Let us proceed now to the examination of the queſtion before us; only remarking farther, that whatever may be thought of the obſervations juſt made, or of their application, this will not effect the point before us.

The principal inſtruments in the firſt propagation of the Chriſtian religion were the apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe, according to their own account were unlearned and ignorant men; and would therefore be looked on with contempt, by the proud ſelf important doctors of their own nation, and by

the haughty philoſophers of Greece and Rome: They taught the religion of a man who had been crucified; which was matter of great offence to Jew and Gentile. Among their own countrymen they had to encounter an attachment to the Jewiſh religion, rendered inveterate by the force of education and habit. Among the Gentiles they were ſet in oppoſition to the monſtrous maſs of polytheiſm, eſtabliſhed by law, and ſupported by the arm of an intolerant magiſtracy, and by the unyielding preſcriptions of cuſtom, and by the inflexibility of religious bigotry. They were oppoſed to a religion, which, in its daily ceremonies encouraged, or at leaſt permitted unbounded gratifications of the appetites; and whoſe moſt hallowed myſteries gave opportunities for aſſignation and intrigue. In addition to this there were in every town of Italy, of Greece, of Aſia Minor, of Egypt, and indeed of moſt parts of the Roman empire, men of learning and accuteneſs termed philoſophers. Theſe were conſidered the public inſtructors of mankind. And when the apoſtles of Chriſtianity came forward, aſſuming the ſame office, and teaching the weakneſs of human nature, the inſignificancy of their philoſophic dogmas and the folly of their wiſdom; their pride was deeply wounded, and they were inflamed with the keeneſt malignity againſt theſe humble fiſhermen. And ſtill farther, theſe humble preachers boldly declaimed againſt the vices of that moſt diſſolute and profligate age; and taught the neceſſity of repentance of mortification and ſelf-denial, and of a holy life. They did not, however, hold out the idea that this conſiſted in occaſional flights of enthuſiaſm, in great horrors, and ſucceeding raptures; but in the deligent and faithful diſcharge of all the duties reſulting from all the relations of life. We ſee then a religion to be demoliſhed, which was ſupported by the potent arm of civil authority, by the mighty power of cuſtom, by the deadly bitterneſs and obſtinacy of religious bigotry; by the art and cunning of a prieſthood, as knaviſh, and as powerful as Chriſtian prieſts have ever been repreſented; by all the wit, and learning, and acuteneſs of philoſophers in ſhort by all orders and ranks, and conditions in life. And in the room of this there was to

be eſtabliſhed a religion teaching theſe myſterious doctrines ſo offenſive to modern infidels ; inculcating a pure morality, denouncing eternal deſtruction againſt the impenitent perpetrators of iniquity ; and offering life, and the favor of Heaven only to the pure in heart. Now he who can believe that in ſuch a combination of circumſtances, ſuch men, preaching ſuch doctrines, could eſtabliſh Chriſtianity on the ruins of heatheniſm by their unaſſiſted powers, may forever hold his peace reſpecting the credulity of Chriſtians. He who can believe this can believe that any effect, however great can be produced by any cauſe however inadequate. He that believes this, can believe the ſtory about the earth being toſſed out of the ſun by a volcanic eruption—or any thing at all.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

A DISCUSSION OF SOME POINTS RELATIVE TO INFANT BAPTISM.

NO. I.

Some difficulties which result from the opinion that Infant-baptism is not an Apostolical practice.

THAT, which can be uſed with as much propriety, and ſucceſs, on one ſide of a diſpute, as the other, deſerves not the name of an argument, and ought to be diſcarded from both. Of this kind, are confident aſſertions, the inſinuation of improper motives and defect of underſtanding, and every ſpecies of invective. A poſitive, dogmatical air, may influence the weak and ignorant, but will have no weight with the candid inquirer after truth. With ſuch, a writer, or ſpeaker cannot injure himſelf more, than by affirming things to be evident and certain, which remain in doubt and obſcurity. It is very common for thoſe who oppoſe infant baptiſm, to aſſert, that nothing but prejudice, and intereſted motives, can prevent any one from ſeeing, and acknowledging, that they are right.—This appears to me to evince, not only a want of candor, but

alſo, a very ſuperficial acquaintance with the ſubject in diſpute. On whichever ſide the truth may lie, it is not ſelf-evident, but requires attention, impartiality, and labor, to extricate it, and place it in a clear point of light.

As an advocate for infant baptiſm, I am ready to acknowledge, that the ſubject is attended with no ſmall difficulty; and I will, in this paper, ſtate ſome of the conſequences which follow from the contrary opinion; that it may appear how little reaſon the Baptiſts have for their confident boaſting, that no difficulties adhere to *their* ſcheme.

1. It is, a neceſſary conſequence of the denial of infant baptiſm, that for at leaſt a thouſand years, one of the moſt diſtinguiſhing, and important ordinances of Chriſt's church, was utterly loſt; and that during this long period, no perſon was regularly admitted into the church of Chriſt. Yea it follows, that there was no viſible church—No ordinances adminiſtered agreeably to the will of God—No perſons qualified to adminiſter, or receive the Lord's ſupper; or to preach the goſpel, or perform any other duty of a church officer or church member.

Now is it credible, that Chriſt would leave his church to err in a matter ſo fundamental to its external conſtitution, for ſuch a length of time? Is it conſiſtent with his promiſe to his diſciples, and their ſucceſſors, juſt before he aſcended on high? '*Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world?*' Can it be reconciled to his ſolemn declaration to Peter, when he had made a noble confeſſion of his divinity. '*On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell ſhall never prevail againſt it?*' I do not ſuppoſe, that Chriſt has promiſed to preſerve his church pure from every error, but he has promiſed to preſerve his church in exiſtence; and a regular entrance into it, is neceſſary to its exiſtence. There can be no viſible church without members and miniſters, but according to the principles of the Baptiſts, there can be neither, conſtituted agreeably to the will of the Head of the church, without baptiſm.

Will it be ſaid, that churches exiſted in ſome obſcure valley, or remote region, who practiſed *ſcriptural* baptiſm through

this long period? I ask where? What hiſtorian mentions them? If none, then it is bare conjecture—unfounded aſſertion, which cannot be admitted. It is in vain to refer us to the Waldenſes and Albigenſes, for as it cannot be proved that they denied infant baptiſm, ſo neither can their origin be traced to a period ſufficiently early, to anſwer the purpoſe. I know it is a favorite opinion with Dr. Gill, Gall, and others, that theſe people were baptiſts, but though it may be admitted, that Peter Bruis, and a few more, as early as the eleventh century, did deny infant baptiſm, yet that this was the doctrine of the perſecuted churches in the valleys of Piedmont, is entirely unſupported by authentic hiſtory; and there is one fact, which diveſts the opinion of every degree of probability. After the reformation, in the year 1530,* the remnants of theſe deſolated churches, united with the Swiſſe churches, who all held and practiſed infant baptiſm, and there was found to be an almoſt perfect agreement between the doctrine and diſcipline of the Reformed churches, and the moſt ancient catechiſms of the Waldenſes.

2. But another conſequence, more embarraſſing than the former is, that upon Baptiſt principles, it is impoſſible there ever ſhould be a regularly conſtituted church, with proper officers authorized to adminiſter ordinances, without a new revelation: and conſequently none of thoſe perſons now called Baptiſts have been regularly baptized; nor have they amongſt them any perſons qualified to adminiſter this ordinance. Unleſs they can ſhew that there has been a regular ſucceſſion of Baptiſt churches, in the world, ſince the Apoſtle's times, the conſequence now ſtated is inevitable. For, ſuppoſe I were now convinced that true Chriſtian baptiſm was utterly loſt for a thouſand years paſt, and were to adminiſter it according to what I believed to be the Scriptural mode, it would not be valid, becauſe I would not be a proper adminiſtrator, never having been baptized myſelf; and there would be no poſſibility of reviving the original practice without a new commiſſion.

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* *See Moſheim's Ecc. Hiſt.* *Lampe's Synopſis.*

If the miniſter of another denomination baptizes a *believer* by immerſion, yet the Baptiſts will not hold it to be true and valid baptiſm, becauſe the adminiſtrator is in their opinion unbaptized himſelf. I have known inſtances of this kind, in which a perſon baptized at adult age by a Pedobaptiſt miniſter, by immerſion, was rebaptized upon joining the Baptiſt church.

I would aſk then who baptized the firſt preachers of the preſent ſect of Baptiſts? Undoubtedly ſome one who was himſelf unbaptized according to their notions.—The firſt inſtance being unſcriptural and irregular, all which follow and depend upon it, muſt be ſo alſo.—The ſtreams cannot be purer than the fountain from which they iſſue.

We need not be told again that it might have come down regularly through the Albigenſes, &c. for even if they were baptiſts, which we have proved they were not; yet thoſe who are on this continent, and in moſt places of Europe, never received their baptiſm from them. The founders of this religion did not wait for an adminiſtration from beyond the Alpes, but proceeded as though they had had a ſpecial commiſſion from Heaven, like the apoſtles, to which indeed they at firſt and many of them, long ſince pretended.

The only evaſion which can be made, is, that when the church becomes very corrupt *that* is proper to be done, which would not be ſo in an ordinary ſtate of affairs. Though this doctrine was advanced by ſome Proteſtants at the time of the reformation, yet I entirely diſſent from it, and conſider it a dangerous principle which opens the door for every man of enthuſiaſtic mind to violate the rules of Chriſt's church, and to intrude himſelf into offices, and to the performance of duties, to which he was never called, whenever he ſhall be of opinion that the church has become corrupt.

It would be much better to ſay, that Chriſt would never ſuffer his church ſo far to fail, as to make ſuch irregular proceedings neceſſary; but if he did, a new revelation would become neceſſary, to direct us how a reformation ſhould be made.

3. A third conſequence of the denial of infant baptiſm, is, that all the other churches of Chriſtians upon earth, are not true churches. Their miniſters are irregular and have not entered the ſacred office according to the will of Chriſt; and all their adminiſtrations in the church are unauthorized. It is therefore unſcriptural for them to preach or adminiſter the Lord's ſupper. And conſequently unlawful for the people to hear them or encourage them.

Upon this principle, the Proteſtant and reformed churches, however eminent for their knowledge, piety, and good works, were no churches of Chriſt, and thoſe moſt excellent reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Melanchton, Cranmer, Knox, &c. were not the authorized miniſters of Chriſt. But if we wiſh to find the true church at that glorious period, we muſt go to Munſter, and the other places where the Anabaptiſts held their frantic meetings.

The preſent Baptiſts are guilty of a great inconſiſtency with reſpect to this matter. They boldly affirm that infant baptiſm is no baptiſm, and that no unbaptized perſon has a right to partake of the Lord's Supper; and ſo they exclude from their communion the members of all other churches, however pious, and prohibit their members from communing with other churches; and thus far they are conſiſtent with themſelves. But they will admit the preachers of other denominations into their pulpits, and will hear and encourage them, as though they were regular miniſters of the Goſpel, which, upon their principles, is altogether inconſiſtent; for ſurely a man cannot be a regular officer in the church, before he is a regular member. And if it be wrong to hold fellowſhip with a man as a private member of the church, it muſt be much more ſo to hold miniſterial communion with him.

4. A fourth conſequence of the opinion of the baptiſts, is, that an univerſal change muſt have taken place in the church with regard to the ſubjects of baptiſm, and yet not the leaſt mention made of it, by any eccleſiaſtical writer; yea, ſo imperceptibly was this revolution brought about, that men, the moſt diſtinguiſhed for their knowledge of eccleſiaſtical affairs,

knew nothing of it, in the age which immediately ſucceeded it.

We know, that errors, and hereſies did very early make their appearance; but they excited much attention, and met with vigorous oppoſition; and a particular account of them has been left on record by cotemporary writers; ſo that in moſt caſes, we can tell who broached and propagated them, who moſt zealouſly oppoſed them, and where, and when they were condemned, or prevailed. But with reſpect to infant baptiſm, we find no writer ſpeaking of it as an error, or innovation. Tertullian, the only one of the Fathers who diſſuades from the practice, does not pretend that it was a new thing in the church, or that it was contrary to the Scriptures; but his words evidently imply the contrary: and his advice is not confined to infants, but extends to all unmarried perſons, becauſe he had adopted the opinion that ſins committed after baptiſm, were ſcarcely pardonable. All the reſt of the Fathers who mention infant baptiſm ſpeak in favour of it; and it evidently appears that they had never heard of any diſpute reſpecting it, for when in a large Synod the queſtion was propoſed whether the baptiſm of infants ſhould be, like circumciſion, deferred to the eighth day, it was unanimouſly agreed that ſuch delay was not neceſſary—no one of the aſſembled biſhops ſtating any queſtion as to the right of infants to baptiſm, which proves moſt ſatisfactorily, that at that early period, about the middle of the third age, which was not more than 160 years after the death of the apoſtle John, there was a univerſal conſent and agreement on this ſubject. And ſome of the Fathers, who had travelled far and read much, and who were not ſo remote from the times of the apoſtles, as we are from the reformation, declare,* that the practice was derived from the apoſtles, and one of extenſive knowledge, though it would have greatly favored his cauſe to deny it, yet declares that he never heard of any heretic who diſputed the right of infants to baptiſm.

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* *Origin.*

This then, upon Baptiſt principles muſt be the ſtate of the affair.—The apoſtles baptized none but believing adults, and when they left the world, all chriſtian churches had the ſame uniform practice, and knew that infants were improper ſubjects of baptiſm: but in one or two hundred years after their death, a total change took place in the ſentiments and practice of the church, nobody knows when, or by what means. And ſo ſilently and ſecretly was this alteration effected, that no diſpute ever aroſe on the ſubject, and ſo univerſally did it extend, that out of thouſands of churches planted in Aſia, Europe, and Africa, not one as far as our information goes, retained the primitive and apoſtolical practice, which they had been taught. And ſo perfect was the oblivion which had overſpread this tranſaction, that the moſt extenſively learned men, who lived in the ſucceeding ages, and poſſeſſed hundreds of books written in the primitive age, which are now loſt, and many of which were hiſtories of the church, had no knowledge of this great revolution, but *simply* ſuppoſed that the practice which they purſued had been received from the apoſtles. And ſo little were they acquainted with the ideas and arguments of the Baptiſts, that not one of them ſeems to have entertained a ſuſpicion that it was contrary to Scripture. If any man can credit all this, why then he may be a Baptiſt, but for my part I think this ſingle conſequence ſufficient to overthrow the opinion from which it flows. Until new light can be caſt upon the hiſtory of the church for the firſt ages, it will hang as a dead weight to the Baptiſt ſyſtem, and in the eye of ſound impartial reaſon muſt ſink it. The evaſion which will be attempted, is that there are many popiſh ceremonies, which claim as early an origin, and may by the ſame argument be defended, to which I anſwer, Let it once be made appear, that any practice of the Roman church prevailed as early, as univerſally, and with as little oppoſition.—That by learned and good men it was declared to be an apoſtolical rite—and that no one was ever heard of by them, who denied it: and moreover let it be ſhewn, that the ſaid practice, is as conſentaneous with the ſpirit, and letter of the Scriptures, as infant baptiſm, and

I will promiſe, not to renounce this practice, but to adopt the other, whatever it may be, as a part of the religion of Chriſt.

5. A fifth conſequence of the Baptiſt ſyſtem is, that it renders it impracticable to bring all the human race into the church of Chriſt, even if the time ſhould come when all would be members of Chriſt's body. The command of the Saviour is to '*baptize all nations*,' which ſeems at leaſt to imply that all might poſſibly become proper ſubjects of baptiſm: and thoſe who inſiſt ſo much upon the expreſs words of this commiſſion ought to conſider that theſe words do include infants, for *they* make up a large part of every nation. The Scriptures predict a glorious ſtate of the church yet future, in which '*all ſhall know the Lord from the leaſt to the greateſt.*'— Now in that happy period it is to be preſumed, that a great portion of the human family will be regenerated from the womb; and that it will be as common for children, as ſoon as they can ſpeak to give evidences of a pious diſpoſition, as it is now to diſcover the contrary.

But according to the Baptiſt ſcheme, infants muſt not he taken into the church, even if we knew them to be regenerated, and thus a part of Chriſt's lambs would be excluded from his fold, notwithſtanding the tender regard which he ſhewed to ſuch when upon earth. To this it may be anſwered, that as ſoon as a child can ſpeak, and exhibit evidences of ſincere piety, it may be baptized, but this is inconſiſtent with Baptiſt principles. According to them, the proper ſubject of baptiſm, muſt make a profeſſion of faith, and muſt underſtand the nature, and feel the obligation of the duty to be performed, which an infant is incapable of doing as ſoon as it may exhibit ſigns of a renewed heart. Children of three or four years of age have often given ſatisfactory evidences of piety, but will any one ſay that a child of this age is capable of judging for itſelf that baptiſm is a duty, and that it ought to be performed by immerſion, or by any other mode in particular? I would aſk then what would the Baptiſts do with a child of this kind? If they would baptize it without a profeſſion they would practiſe to a certain extent, infant baptiſm, and all the

common objections from the want of knowledge and understanding in the ſubject would apply, and they would concede the main principle which is in contention between them and us. But if they would refuſe, then the difficulty above ſtated occurs, that they would not admit into Chriſt's church thoſe perſons whom he has marked, and diſcovered to be his own. And I would alſo aſk when will this age of infancy be over? Where ſhall be drawn the line between infancy and adult age? Here a new difficulty meets us.—Suppoſe ſuch a ſtate of the church as has been mentioned, as future—ſuppoſe the influences of the Holy Spirit copiouſly ſhed on perſons of every age, down to the infant of a day old— And ſuppoſe children of all ages, according to the clearneſs of their conceptions, exhibiting evidences of love to God, or a diſpoſition prompting them to ſeek him and obey him, where would the Baptiſt begin in admitting theſe children into the church? Would he receive the babe which could juſt liſp the Savour's name, and reject the ſpeechleſs infant at the breaſt, merely becauſe its organs were not yet formed to utterance? Or rejecting both, would he fix on ſome higher age as the age of diſcretion? Whatever period that might be, it would be an arbitrary ſelection, for there are none ſuch clearly marked in the progreſs of human nature, from infancy to manhood: and the adminiſtrator muſt neceſſarily receive ſome and reject others, where the ſhades of diſtinction would be ſcarcely preceptible.

But moreover, when the ſpirit of God operates on the minds of infants, or very young perſons, the ſteps of the change are not ſo evident as in adults: and if we require what is called '*An experience*,' (with which the Baptiſts never diſpenſe,) we will greatly obſtruct the acceſs of God's children to him in the ordinances of his appointment. In ſhort, upon this plan we would be perpetually embarraſſed in receiving members into the church, at a time when piety would be common among perſons of tender years. And even in the preſent ſtate of the church, the Baptiſt ſcheme ſeems better to ſuit thoſe places, where the people are without religious education, and

are almoſt in the condition of Heathens as to religious knowledge, than thoſe in which attention has been paid to the inſtruction of children in the principles of religion, and where the people have been long formed into regular churches. Hence the Baptiſts proceed very much as if they were at the firſt planting of chriſtianity; and hence they are too favorable to the opinion, that men muſt have run to ſome lengths in ſin and remained ſome time in unbelief, before they can be ſincere converts of religion. They are therefore leſs alarmed at the vices and extravagances of youth, even their own children, and calculate leſs upon the efficacy of religious education than others. And whether it be the effect of their principles or not, it is a fact, that the children of Baptiſts are brought up with leſs care, and under fewer reſtraints than thoſe of any other profeſſors; and they are conſequently more generally wild, and diſcover leſs reverence for things ſacred than others. This is becoming a matter of greater and greater notoriety every day, the more fully their ſyſtem comes into operation. Some of them indeed ſpeak in favor of the religious education of youth, but few of them practice it, and many are entirely hoſtile to it. This is an evil of a moſt ſerious nature—producing a more baneful effect, than hundreds of ſpeculative errors, which are but ſlightly related to our daily practice. If wholeſome culture be not applied to the minds of men in their infancy, we may indeed in ſome few caſes boaſt of a more viſible change, but the ſtate of ſociety, civil and religious, will be moſt deplorable. I mean to caſt no unjuſt reproaches, nor uncandid cenſures upon this ſociety. I am willing to admit, that to a certain extent they have been uſeful, and that many pious perſons are to be found amongſt them; but at the ſame time I appeal to every impartial obſerver, whether it be not a fact, that in thoſe places where Baptiſt churches have been longeſt eſtabliſhed, there is a great laxity in morals among the people generally, and a high degree of irreverence with reſpect to ſacred things amongſt the youth in particular!

The opinions of the Baptiſts appear to me to be founded on narrow and ſuperficial views of the Scriptures. They do

not conſider how widely different our ſituation is from that of the Jews and Gentiles to whom the goſpel was firſt preached: they therefore apply thoſe paſſages of Scripture which had reference to the primitive ſtate of the church, to the proſent ſtate without any allowance for the change of circumſtances. They bind us down to the expreſs letter of the Scriptures by rules, which the Scriptures no where authorize; and often triumph in the mere ſound of words, where a liberal and juſt interpretation of the text, would make nothing in their favor.

Q.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

PHILANDER TO POLITUS.

A series of letters on the tendency of religion to promote the happineſs of mankind in the present world.

LETTER I.

SIR,

YOU expreſs ſurpriſe at my having aſſerted that the religious man has greatly the advantage of the irreligious for the attainment of happineſs, even in the preſent life. You admit that in reſpect to our eternal welfare, religion is a matter of the higheſt importance. But as to this world, you have always thought the gloomineſs of devotion, and the innumerable reſtraints which religion impoſes on its votaries, muſt greatly diminiſh the number of their pleaſures and the ſum of their happineſs. You are far from being ſingular in this way of thinking. The young, the faſhionable, the rich, the voluptuous, are very generally and deeply infected with this prejudice againſt religion. They take it for granted, without ſeeking for any proof, that it is a ſad and ſlaviſh bondage, deſtructive of all the beſt pleaſures of life. By the way, I muſt be permitted to obſerve, that were this view of a religious life,

even perfectly juſt, it would not afford a reaſonable plea for the neglect of religion one ſingle hour. Is not the duration of our life abſolutely uncertain? Are not heaven and hell, eternal happineſs and eternal miſery, things of infinite moment? If then the path of religion, this thorny, uninviting, and miſerable path, as many ſuppoſe it, be the only one by which we may eſcape hell and obtain heaven, is it not manifeſtly our intereſt, as God has made it our duty, to engage at once, with all earneſtneſs and perſeverance, in running the race which is ſet before us? Is it the part of wiſdom to ſit balancing between the petty pleaſnres of a few years and '*that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory*,' which is the prize of the Chriſtian; between the little ſacrifices and pains of this fleeting life and '*that undying worm, that unquenchable fire*,' which are the inevitable portion of all who work iniquity and neglect religion? Surely theſe queſtions can be anſwered but in one way, and muſt extort that anſwer immediately from every conſiderate mind.

But I have called this notion of a religious life a prejudice. I have aſſerted, that the very reverſe of it is true. And in my turn, I cannot but feel ſurpriſe that you ſhould deem this aſſertion a novel one; for it has been repeated among Chriſtians a thouſand times. However, you call upon me to vindicate the poſition I have taken; and I cheerfully accept the call. There are indeed ſome intrinſic difficulties in the ſubject. It is, in the nature of the caſe, not very eaſy to compare pleaſures of different kinds, and to weigh them with preciſion againſt each other. Still more difficult is it duly to impreſs the reſult of ſuch a proceſs upon a mind which has experienced the pleaſures only of one ſide of the compariſon: for ſuch is our nature that the idea we form of any ſenſation, pleaſure, or pain, which we have never felt, muſt neceſſarily be very imperfect. Yet notwithſtanding theſe difficulties, ſo fully am I perſuaded of the goodneſs of my cauſe, and ſo much do I rely on your good ſenſe and candor, that I do not doubt of convincing you that what has been aſſerted of the tendency

of religion to increaſe even our preſent happineſs is no idle fancy nor ſpecious theory, but the ſimple truth and matter of fact.

Should I reſt the deciſion of this queſtion ſolely upon the teſtimony of thoſe who have a reaſonable claim to the character of real Chriſtians, I know not what could be objected to the mode, nor why the reſult ſhould be conſidered inconcluſive. And I well know what that reſult would be. Conſult as many as you pleaſe of the multiplied records of religious experience. Or conſult living Chriſtians, whoſe ſober ſenſe and ſtrict veracity you acknowledge, and whoſe word you would moſt readily believe in every other caſe. It is evident that Chriſtians alone are competent to decide on the point as a matter of experience; for they have known what are the pleaſures of ſin, and what are thoſe of religion. Inquire of thoſe eſpecially who have enjoyed all the pleaſures which health and riches and honors and power and cultivated taſte and ſucceſsful genius could beſtow, and who are now not aſhamed to be the avowed, humble and faithful diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. Aſk them whether religion has diminiſhed or increaſed their happineſs. Their united anſwer will be ſubſtantially the following: "We have taſted the pleaſures of the world. We will not ſay that they were no pleaſures: but many of them were productive of far greater and more laſting pain; and even the beſt we have found very tranſient and unſatisfactory. But God, in his rich mercy, has now given us pleaſures emphatically worthy of the name, in communion with himſelf through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in the keeping of his holy commandments, and in the glorious hopes inſpired by his goſpel. We knew not what true felicity was until we found it here. It is true, religion calls for ſacrifices and ſelf-denial; and we often experience painful conflicts between the fleſh and the Spirit, between our wayward inclinations and a regard to our duty. Yet all theſe are abundantly compenſated by the delight of victory over ſin, the ſmiles of our God, and the approbation of a good conſcience. Even our earthly ſatisfactions are improved by the ſentiments of grateful piety which religion has

taught us to mingle with them. In a word, we know that we are much more happy in the ſervice of God than we ever were or could be in the ways of ſinful or mere worldly pleaſure." Some of this language may appear to you rather unintelligible; but the concluſion of the whole is ſuch as cannot be miſunderſtood.

Again. As you acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible, its declarations will, with you, be deciſive. And I think they are moſt abundantly in my favor. I ſhall, at preſent, only quote two or three paſſages, which appear to me plainly and directly to teach the doctrine for which I contend. '*The ways of wisdom*,—ſays the wiſeſt of men, meaning by wiſdom the ſame thing with religion—*the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.**' The Apoſtle Paul aſſerts, that '*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*'† But I requeſt your particular attention to thoſe very remarkable words of our bleſſed Lord himſelf—'*Verily I ſay unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*'‡ That is, he ſhall be compenſated with happineſs an hundred-fold, even in this world, for all theſe loſſes, and this notwithſtanding the perſecutions he ſhall ſuffer; as well as obtain everlaſting felicity in heaven. Do not theſe texts, though a mere ſpecimen of what might be advanced, fully evince the truth of my propoſition?

I am aware indeed, of ſome apparently ſtrong objections, which may be deduced from the Scripture itſelf. Theſe I ſhall at a proper time conſider, and, as I hope, remove to your ſatisfaction.

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* *Prov. iii.* 17, 18. † 1 *Tim. iv.* 8. ‡ *Mark x.* 29, 30.

But I deſign to go farther than all this. Beſides appealing to the teſtimony of Chriſtians, and the authority of God's word, I will endeavor to ſhow, from the nature of man, and the nature of genuine experimental religion, that the poſition I defend is, and muſt be true. This will lead us into an excurſion of ſome conſiderable extent : but I truſt we ſhall not find it unintereſting, and I pray God it may be greatly uſeful to us both. For the preſent, however, I will relieve your patience, by ſubſcribing myſelf, &c.

PHILANDER.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

AMONGST the many ſources of error in the Chriſtian world, may not a *religious curioſity* be entitled to rank amongſt the moſt fruitful? By a religious curioſity, I mean a propenſity to pry into every ſecret connected with religion, to unravel its myſteries and reduce every thing to a plain, eaſy and comprehenſible ſyſtem.—For this I know no better name than what I have given it, although conſidering it as it often is, the offspring of human pride, it merits a harder appellation —While the attention of men is directed to the moſt intereſting truths of religion, there is little or no diverſity of opinion. Theſe are plain and obvious, and if men would content themſelves by believing and practiſing theſe, without attempting to diſcover how much more may poſſibly be known, it would probably contribute much more to the cauſe of truth and real holineſs than the exerciſe of ſuch a curioſity ever will or can do.

That moral evil exiſts—that man is naturally oppoſed to holineſs—that there is a neceſſity for a change of heart and faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Scriptures ſtate in characters ſo legible that '*he who runs may read.*'—On theſe ſubjects the moſt unlettered Chriſtians are found to agree ; and indeed, on theſe ſubjects conſidered ſimply as truths, the

moſt ignorant Chriſtian is a good divine.—He reads what the Scripture ſtates to be fact—he believes the ſtatement—he remembers it and acts upon his belief, without any enquiry into other things which may be but remotely connected with theſe, and only mentioned in an incidental manner where theſe truths are exhibited at large.—With reſpect, alſo, to the perfections of Deity, ſo far as his character is revealed in the Scriptures, there is little, if any, difference of opinion—Theſe mentioned certainly are to us the moſt intereſting ſubjects of religion—I mean not to exclude others which are intimately connected with theſe, and concerning which, as it reſpects their truth, the word of God is explicit and full.

But '*vain man would be wise, though he were born as the wild ass's colt*,' not contented to receive and act upon the plain truths of Scripture, he muſt amuſe himſelf with others which give more room for a diſplay of lively fancy and keen conjecture.—The mode of all theſe things muſt be underſtood. Even the character of God muſt be ſo completely inveſtigated, that little or no myſtery remain attached to it—The mode of his government muſt be underſtood—his ſovereignty muſt be reconciled with the moral agency of man—the trinity muſt be be explained—*how* and *when* man becomes a ſinner—how the ways of God can be juſtified in permitting evil to exiſt—whether any plan could have been adopted by infinite wiſdom better than the one already adopted, and in which we ſee both moral and natural evil to exiſt.—All theſe queſtions and many more muſt be ſolved by the enquirer, nor will any thing leſs than certainty ſatisfy him. So far as theſe ſubjects can be clearly and certainly known from Scripture, it is doubtleſs proper and uſeful to purſue them; for God never deſigned that we ſhould be ignorant of thoſe things which he has revealed.—But when we take uncertain ground, where the expreſſions are dark and myſterious—when we labor to eſtabliſh an opinion by far fetched inference; our inveſtigations may weary or amuſe ourſelves and others, but will not benefit the cauſe of ſimple truth.—From the effect of ſuch inveſtigations it would ſometimes appear as if plain truths had been kept out of ſight

until a theory had been formed on ſubjects of a more intricate kind.—A wild and uncertain ſyſtem is formed, the effect of much labor and logical reaſoning—it muſt be true—other things muſt be tried by it and made to agree, or be rejected—Thus the plaineſt truth is warped from its original deſign, and made to ſpeak the language of a favorite ſcheme.—The more men indulge this theoretical ſpirit, the fonder they become of idle ſpeculation—It is ſo in other ſubjects, and ſo in religion—Every thing muſt be completely underſtood in all its parts—Even eternity muſt be fathomed, and incomprehenſibility comprehended. If in ſuch a caſe the theoriſt himſelf ſhould ſtand firm in the truth, others are often led into error by circuitous reaſonings which they cannot underſtand.—But perhaps it will be objected that the evil ariſes not from the reaſons of the ſpeculatiſt, but from the ignorance of the world, and thence may be infered the neceſſity of increaſing their knowledge by the very means here cenſured.—Could any certain information be obtained by ſuch ſpeculations, the objection and inference would be juſt, and ſo far as any can be obtained, the objection will be allowed its full weight—But improvement in knowledge ſuppoſes an additional acquaintance with truth, not with probabilities only; and theſe laſt are the general reſult of *a religious curioſity* in the myſteries of religion.—It is therefore not calculated to inform men—It may induce them, as it too often does the ſpeculatiſt himſelf, to diſpiſe the common path in which there is neither danger nor glory, and excite them to conjecture what *may* be truth, inſtead of receiving in the love of it what *certainly* is.

The mind cannot always be on the ſtretch.—If, impelled by its own curioſity or allured by others, it is led into the mazes of conjecture, it becomes weary and endeavors to find a reſting place on ſome certain ground—If it has not progreſſed ſo far as to have loſt ſight of that on which it once ſtood firm, it may ſtill ſafely return.—But it often happens that the mind becomes ſo involved in the purſuit, that it cannot return to its original condition, but embraces whatever appears only probable, or becomes ſceptical on every ſubject.

But, it will be aſked, are all exertions of the human mind to be checked, and is it improper to exerciſe its powers but upon plain and obvious truths? The obſervations here made are not intended to prevent improvement, nor to cramp the energies of the mind, but to prevent their eccentricity and direct their courſe—Much labor may be loſt if it is not rightly directed.—It is not enough to know that we ought to act, but alſo when and where our actions may be uſeful.—There are ſubjects, on which it is uſeleſs to dwell—no diſcoveries can with certainty be made—They are, in a word, beyond the reach of our powers—Speculations on theſe muſt be uſeleſs at beſt, and they are ſeldom free from dangerous conſequences.—One of the firſt things we ſhould do is to enquire what are the proper ſubjects of human knowledge—What can the human mind completely and fairly inveſtigate—after this is determined we may proceed with ſafety and hope for ſucceſs.—It muſt in the mean time be acknowledged that it is a nice point to decide, and evils may ariſe from a miſtake on either hand—If we are over timid we may reſt ignorant of many uſeful truths; and if we overleap the bounds preſcribed to the powers of the human mind, we are involved in uncertainty, and our reſearch will be likely to terminate in error. But on religious ſubjects is doubtleſs the ſafeſt to err on the ſide of modeſty—The conſequences will not be ſo dangerous—Philoſophy may admit of many bold conjectures which may nevertheleſs be very harmleſs, and the moſt unſkilful philoſopher may be a very good man—But religious ſubjects are much more ſacred—They ſhould be handled with reverence. On theſe, nothing conjectural ſhould be admitted—God has given us certainty on all intereſting truths, and nothing but abſolute certainty ought ever to ſatisfy us.—If there are ſubjects on which God has not given us this, there is but little probability that it will be obtained by any human exertion.—A heathen may form conjectural opinions on religion, perhaps, without a crime—He has nothing to guide him but conjecture founded on the works of God—He is, at firſt, ignorant of the truths of the Goſpel and cannot be likely to looſe by enquiry.—Our condition is very

different, God has given a revelatiou of all things really needful for us. Beyond this he has forbidden us to ſearch—The ſilence of his word on many points of controverſy as well as our own capacities, have fixed bounds to our curioſity.—We take too much upon us when we attempt to pry into things which God has veiled from human view—The corrupt heart is always ready to preſume on forbidden ground—It is likely to proceed far upon it, when it has the ſpecious pretext that it is engaged in religious enquiry. It is not our buſineſs to form religious ſyſtems, but to receive and act upon that already eſtabliſhed on the ſure baſis of everlaſting truth.

Every thing cannot be known here.—Let, then, our reſearches be confined within the bounds of certainty and ſafety. Were our curioſity ſatisfied by a complete knowledge of thoſe ſubjects which now remains myſterious or uncertain; it is probable we would preſs our enquiries ſtill farther—We find that amongſt the plain truths of religion, things of a myſterious nature are incidentally mentioned—were theſe myſteries unraveled, others beyond theſe might again be brought to view in the courſe of the neceſſary explanation—an infinite chain of ſubjects would no doubt be preſented to the mind, to diſcover all of which is not to be the employment of the preſent life, much leſs completely to underſtand them—To avoid error, we would act wiſely to let myſteries remain as they are—never to attempt to be wiſe beyond what is written, nor to conclude that on any ſubject of a myſterious kind, or one in which the divine character is concerned, we have come at the truth, becauſe we have labored it into a comprehenſible form.

R.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

Extract from the journal of a Virginia Missionary.

PASSING lately through a neighborhood where I had preached ſeveral years ago, I called on an old acquaintance and relative, who has for ſome time paſt profeſſed religion. Of his firſt awakening he gave me the following account.

" You may remember the time when you preached at ——; I was one of your hearers. Until that time I had been quite careleſs about the ſalvation of my ſoul; and for ſome years a profane ſwearer, and otherwiſe groſsly wicked. My heart was not affected by any of the ſolemn truths which you delivered on that occaſion: yet from that day I felt very awful and abiding religious impreſſions. When I ſaw and heard you, I was led to reflect, that a few years ago we were children and playmates together; that now you were become a Chriſtian, and a miniſter of the goſpel, while I remained a miſerably impenitent ſinner, under the wrath of God, and in danger every moment of dropping into hell. Theſe reflections produced in my mind the moſt alarming convictions of ſin, and ſo faſtened them upon me that they were not to be ſhaken off. I was conſtrained to betake myſelf to prayer for divine mercy; and ſo continued until, as I truſt, I obtained the pardon of my ſins by faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

How various are the methods of the Holy Spirit in bringing ſinners unto God! And how ſtrangely does he bleſs the labors of his miniſters often, while they ſeem to themſelves to be ſpending their ſtrength in vain! I remember well that on the day referred to I concluded, with ſorrow of heart, that I had preached the goſpel without the leaſt ſucceſs. Yet God was pleaſed to make me inſtrumental in awakening this perſon; and that not by my preaching, ſtrictly ſpeaking, but merely by my preſence. Let not the preacher of the goſpel deſpond becauſe he ſees no immediate and ſtriking effects of his miniſtrations. Go forth, meſſenger of heavenly mercy, with a patient and cheerful ſpirit; proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation whereſoever thou ſhalt be called. '*In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether ſhall proſper, this or that.*' The Lord may, by thy inſtrumentality, be performing ſtrange and ſecret works of grace, which thou knoweſt not now, but which thou ſhalt know to thy ſurpriſe and joy hereafter.

PHILANDER.

LITERARY NOTICE.

THE

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OR

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BY WILLIAM P. FARRAND.

Appointed editor of the work.

"The design of this work is, in the first place, to promote the religious edification of the readers; and in the second, to increase the funds of the Assembly, destined to the support of missionaries, and the purchase of books of piety, for gratuitous distribution among the poor; to which funds, after defraying the expence of the publication, the whole pecuniary income from the Magazine will be constantly added."

The publicaton of this Magazine commenced with the present year.

POETRY.

PSALM CXLV. 10.

All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy Saints shall bless thee.

GREAT God! how wonderful art thou
In all thy works and ways!
To thee should all thy creatures bow,
And meditate thy praise.

Bright seraphs that surround thy throne
Their noblest honours bring;
From bliss to mortals yet unknown
Superior praises spring.

In mystic harmony above,
The planets roll along,
And teach the universe thy love,
In never-ceasing song!

The winds that ſweep along the ſky,
By thee directed, breathe:
And clouds and vapours float on high,
Or drop in ſhow'rs beneath.

From darkeſt ſhades thy lightning breaks,
And darts thy glory near:
Thy voice in awful thunder ſpeaks,
And fills the wretch with fear.

Compar'd with thine immenſity,
The ſea a drop abides;
'Tis peopled, ebbs and flows by thee,
And foams or gently glides.

The ſummer's heat, the winter's cold,
The ſeaſon's all proclaim:
As each their various ſcenes unfold,—
Thy goodneſs ſtill the ſame.

In flow'rs, and fruits, and trees, and herbs,
The earth thy bounty gives;
And men and reptiles, beaſts and birds,
And ev'ry being lives.

Thy mighty hand, thy watchful care,
Direct each fleeting hour;
And Nature's countleſs forms declare
Thy wiſdom, love, and pow'r.

Yet in thy law alone, we view
Thy juſtice and thy grace;
Deep truths that Nature faintly drew,
And Reaſon could not trace.

But in Moriah's work divine
We learn the wond'rous plan,
Where Juſtice, Love, and Mercy join,
To teach rebellious man.

His doctrines teach, his deeds explain,
his death and triumphs prove
The firſt and beſt of truths we gain,
That our great God is Love.

ALIQUIS.

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